

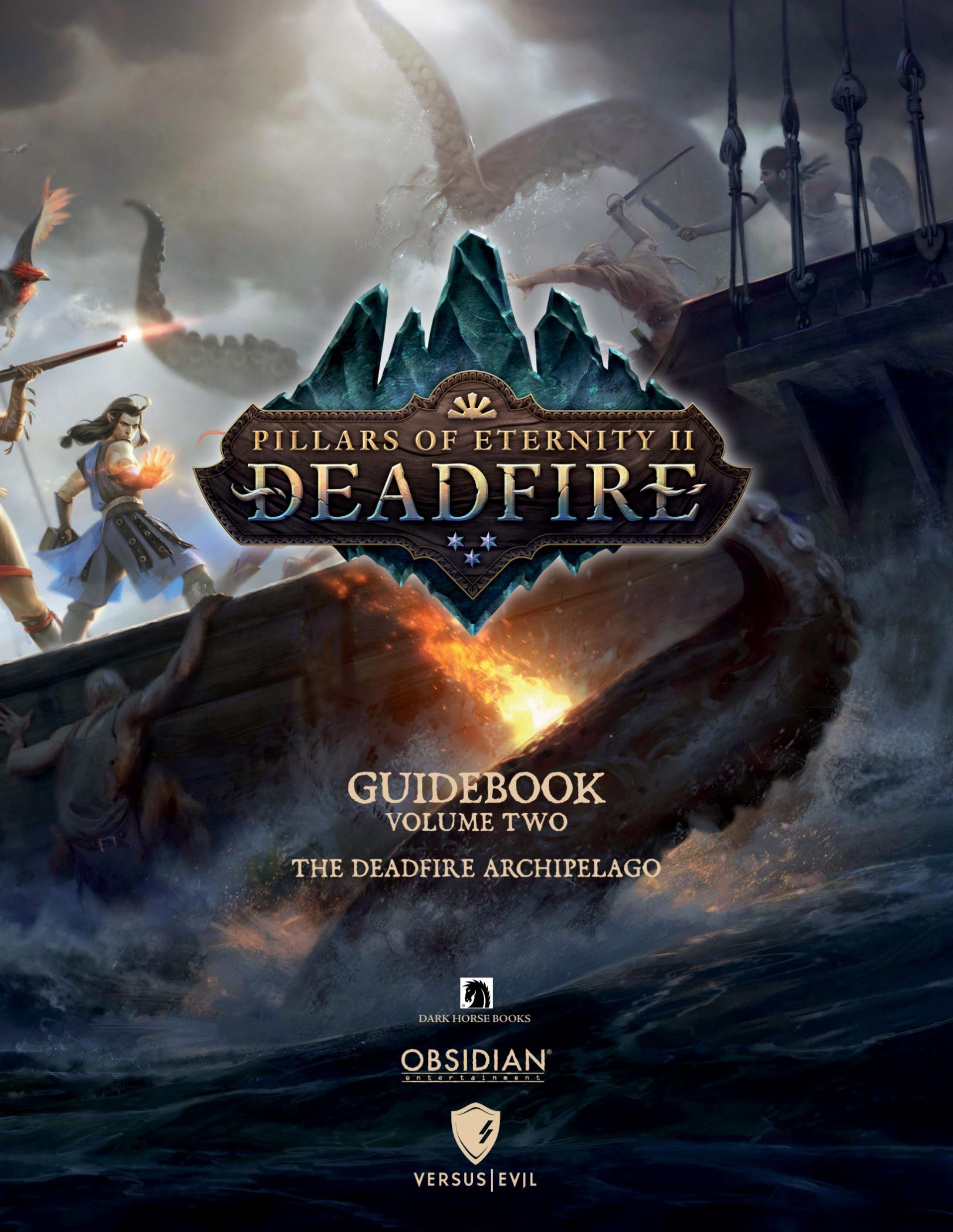


GUIDEBOOK
VOLUME TWO
THE DEADFIRE ARCHIPELAGO



PILLARS OF ETERNITY





PILLARS OF ETERNITY II
DEADFIRE

GUIDEBOOK
VOLUME TWO
THE DEADFIRE ARCHIPELAGO



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PILLARS OF ETERNITY GUIDEBOOK VOLUME TWO: THE DEADFIRE ARCHIPELAGO

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FOREWORD

IT is my great pleasure to welcome you back to Eora. Our first Guidebook dealt with the Dyrwood, a colonial settlement that had been in conflict with the native populace of Eir Glanfath for over a century. It was a land of wildflower meadows, temperate forests, gray stone castles, and not-so-quiet farming villages. Though the Hollowborn crisis threw the entire nation into chaos, it was still a conflict largely confined to the Dyrwood's small corner of the Eastern Reach.

In volume two, we're broadening our view of the world to the Deadfire Archipelago, a great chain of islands encompassing myriad climates and biomes. Living within this great expanse are the native Huana; their would-be colonizers, the Vailian Trading Company and the Royal Deadfire Company; and the colorful pirates of the *Principi sen Patrena*. Huana society is markedly different from the cultures of the Eastern Reach, and the climates, flora, and fauna of the archipelago are vast and varied. Animancy has continued to expand since the Hollowborn crisis, even in the Deadfire. The science of the soul has unlocked amazing new discoveries, from harnessing the power of luminous adra to peering into the realms of the gods, and though they have long been known to the native population, wonderful and terrible creatures surprise, delight, and terrify colonial visitors. Whether these creatures walk in the daylight, fly in darkness, swim in deep ocean currents, or lurk in ancient ruins, every corner of the archipelago contains a new wonder for unprepared interlopers.

The Deadfire Archipelago, like the Eastern Reach, represents another corner of the ever-changing world of Eora. As you gain a greater understanding of the connections and distances between its cultures and places, so too are its people gaining a greater understanding of each other. Though they are often ill prepared for the difficulties these new encounters and discoveries bring, mortal imagination and ambition are rapidly expanding Eora's horizons.

—Josh Sawyer, Design Director

INTRODUCTION THE DEADFIRE

EORA is an old and forgetful world. Her moons have witnessed cataclysm beyond reckoning and incalculable losses over the millennia, all while hanging as cold as the eyes of impassive gods. Her seas are a monument to trial, and the scars placed by those who shaped their environment are worn across the lands with pride. In spite of the history which pervades stone and sea, the magnitude of what Eora has misplaced or forgotten due to time's relentless erosion is nigh unimaginable.

There are places in Eora with deeper memories, which cling to the past and tantalizingly invite anyone of adventuring spirit to explore. The chain of islands that compose the Deadfire Archipelago, so named for its hundreds of sleeping volcanoes, is such a place. Dense jungles may cloak all evidence of the Deadfire's ancient inhabitants, and the silence of long isolation may make tombs of their cities, but history is a lodestone that draws the curious and the ambitious alike. In this environment of discovery, nothing can stay hidden forever.

A rich future can be had in the Deadfire. Some kith call the islands home. Others look to uninhabited tracts of land and see destiny. More still survey the assets of the Deadfire and glimpse a wealthy prospect. No matter their country of origin, all kith share an investment in the security and stability of the islands. When their motives intersect, hope turns to greed, home becomes territory, and the history of culture and settlement quickly deteriorates into a cautionary tale of exploitation and conquest. The devastation of the past begins to stir in its long slumber, growing from a half-remembered truth to a seeming inevitability.

A NOTE ON THE CALENDAR

"Anni Iroccio" is the designation given to years by the reckoning of the Vailian calendar. It is so named after the inventor Iroccio, who devised the most accurate reckoning of time by studying the precise motions of celestial bodies. As it is the most widely accepted standard, the "AI" tag will follow the number of any known year.





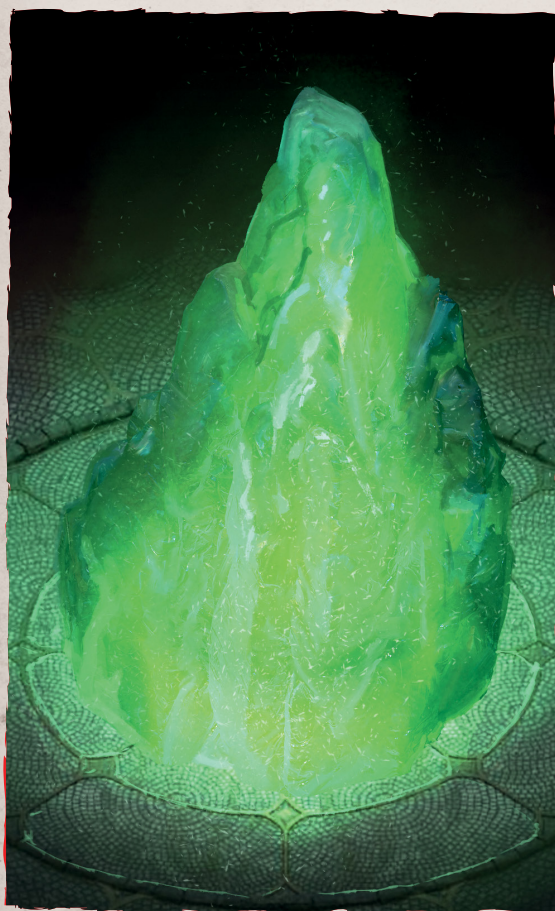
CHAPTER I

FEATURES OF THE
DEADFIRE ARCHIPELAGO

INTRODUCTION TO LUMINOUS ADRA

It would be impossible to understand the Deadfire Archipelago without first understanding luminous adra—its mystery, its importance, and its value. Although there are numerous reasons for the world powers of Eora to make haste for the Deadfire, luminous adra has consistently proven to be the galvanizing force behind these dramatic shifts in cultural priorities. The lengths toward which others would go to exploit or control these mammoth pillars of soul-channeling rock have come to define many of the conflicts that threaten to reshape the face of the Deadfire.

Adra is a rare mineral that sprouts from the earth in the form of gargantuan pillars. It is presumed that each pillar connects to a branching network that extends down to the rocky depths of Eora.

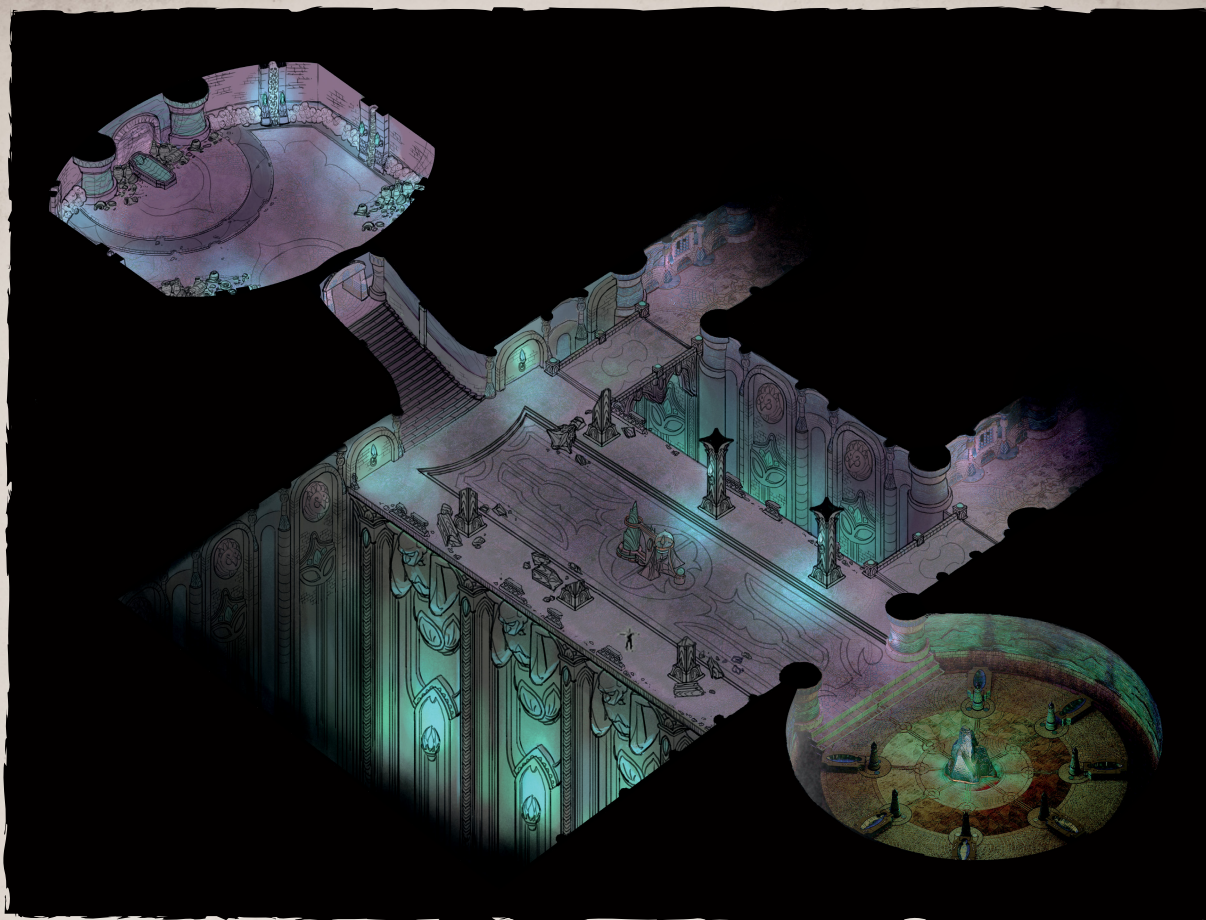


This has not been conclusively proven, as even excavation has its technical limitations. When the Aedyr Empire first looked outward and settled colonists on the Eastern Reach (Dyrwood, 2623 AI), they discovered a wealth of adra pillars near the sites of future villages and among the ruins of Eir Glanfath—the wild region to the east of their settlement. Interest in the adra, its properties, and the ancient ruins built around its focal points would spearhead the generations of war and cultural tensions that followed in the colonial Dyrwood.

Prior to settling in the Dyrwood, no civilized kith had found such abundant quantities of the mineral in a geographically confined space. Fortune hunters who plumbed the remote and forbidden ruins of Eir Glanfath made a startling discovery—the site of Aedyr's colonial ambition was dotted with arcane machines. These strange and semifunctional artifacts were the product of the Engwithans, an ancient society of wise and powerful kith who had long since vanished from the world. With their machines, they drew from the power of the local adra to manipulate soul energy. Whatever the Engwithans had planned for their future, it involved the very geography of Eora to see their work accomplished. Dyrwoodans, however, would only appreciate the value of their find years into colonization, when the practice of harnessing soul energy—animancy—grew in popularity, inspired by the work of the Engwithans.

The Deadfire Archipelago is similarly abundant with intimidating spires of adra. These reach up from the ground in magnificent pillars and even run through the ocean floor, beyond the reach of any tool. There is a significant difference in the character of Deadfire adra compared to the known variety, which the logs of Vailian explorers were keen to record in the earliest days of their settlement.

“Luminous adra,” as it was later dubbed, gives off an ethereal light, which is thought to be a sign that the mineral houses incredibly dense concentrations of soul energy. A wagonload of traditional adra, rare and precious though it may be, could not boast the same well of power contained in a mere shard of luminous adra. Until this property of luminous adra was studied, common understanding held that only Watchers—those who could peer through



the veil of existence—could perceive the energy of a soul. Luminous adra permitted common kith a glimpse of the forces normally beyond their perception.

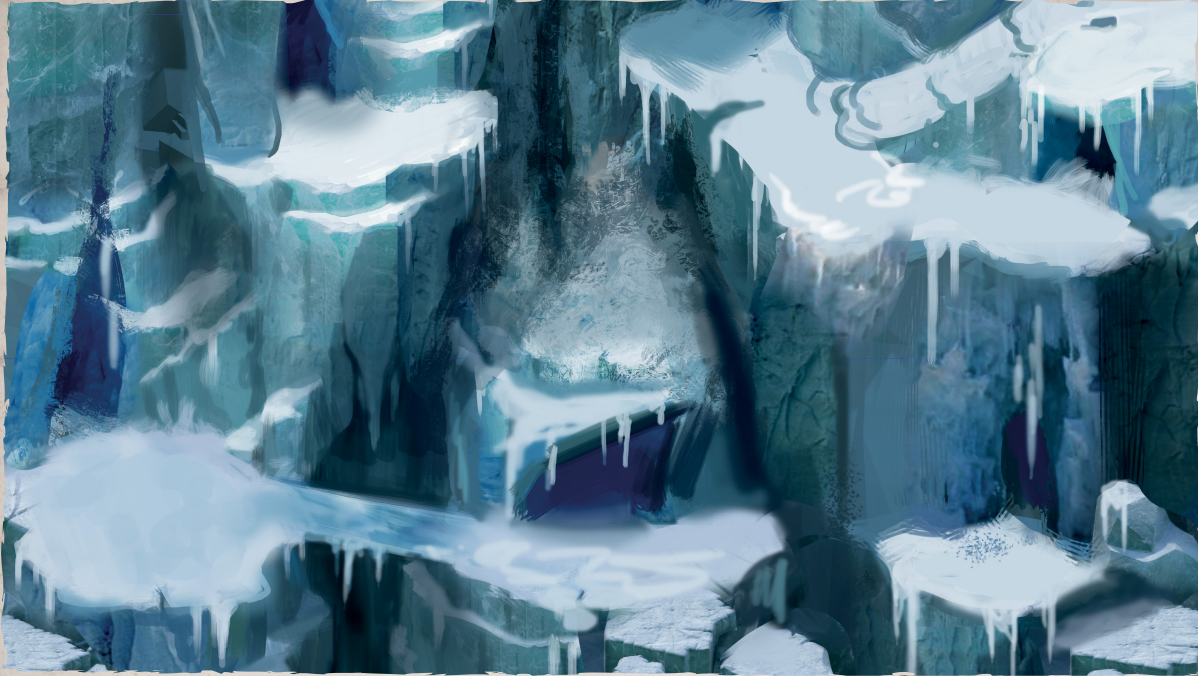
Untold millennia of unchecked growth have contributed to the growth of luminous adra. Powerful roots of it stretch for uncharted miles, all but hidden save for rare outcroppings that reach aboveground or, in even rarer cases, above the waterline. As kith have settled in the Deadfire from parts distant, increasing numbers of ships have run aground on whole reefs of adra. The work of cartographers mapping the southern seas extends not only to charting the islands, but mapping safe routes that veer around known outcroppings.

Colonization of the Deadfire did not begin as a hunt for luminous adra, but took a violent turn in that direction as soon as researchers identified the unique properties of the mineral.

BOSUN spotted light beneath the waves. Light! At first I took it for the Mariner's Affliction, that seasickness which comes of months with no sign of land, or an illusion from our more tricksome moon. Then I caught hints of the blue-green myself—peeking up at me from beneath the waves. We shouldn't have been able to spot adra that deep, yet there it was . . .

It stretched on for days, like a trail laid out before us. We thought ourselves mad. If there was madness on my ship, then it was a shared madness that consumed us all. Even knowing what I do now, I will not soon forget the breath-stealing beauty of that first luminous sighting.

—Captain's log, Sérre



GEOGRAPHY OF THE DEADFIRE

The Deadfire Archipelago spans the length of Eora's southern hemisphere and is composed of untold thousands of islands. Many of its landmasses are either uncharted or beyond the reach of traditional craft. Their inaccessibility is most often attributed to treacherous waters, labyrinthine, volcanic crags, hostile creatures, violent storms, and other environmental challenges. Between the explorers who seek to know the Deadfire inside and out and the Huana who call the islands home, the Deadfire has been thoroughly scoured for secrets, riches, and history. More still remains obscured, waiting to see the light of day.

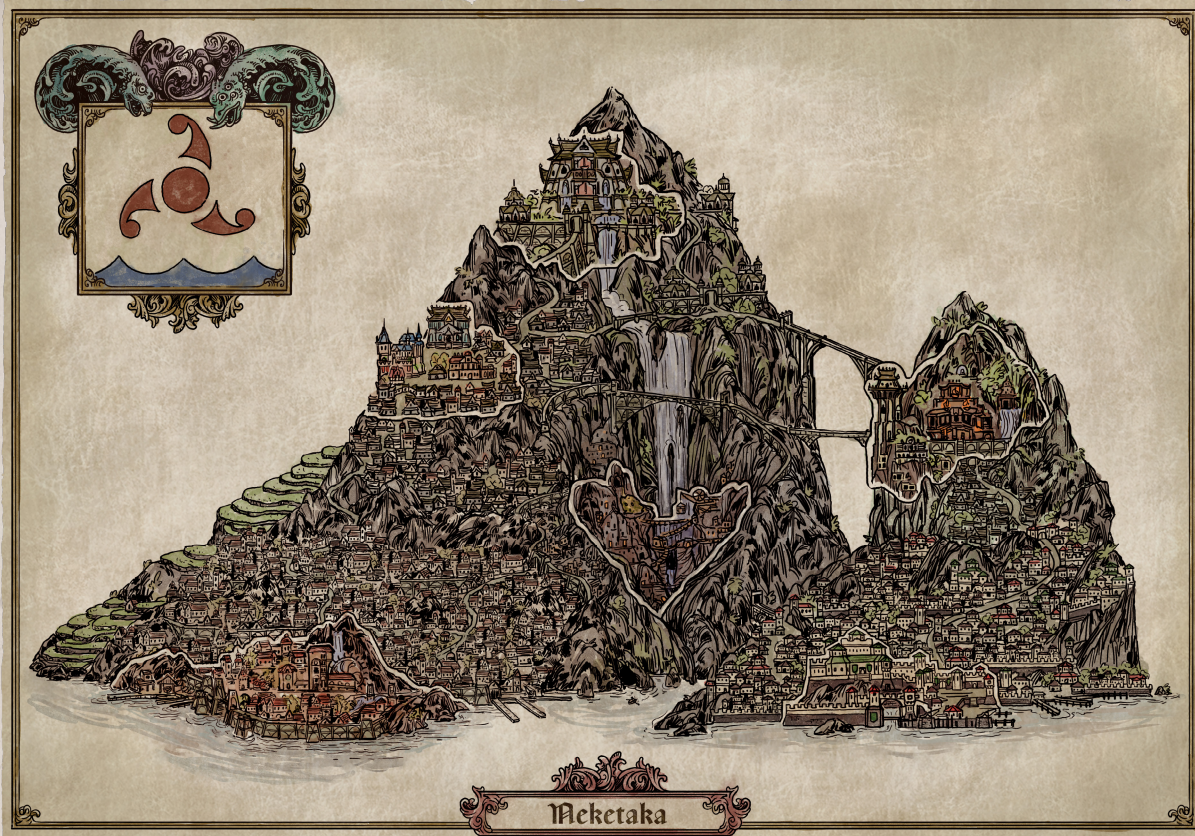
The ancient Huana who settled in the Deadfire millennia ago once charted the islands in terms of their relations to each other. Modern cartographers speculate that this was for the benefit of sailors of ships lost in the labyrinthine straits. It took a deep memory to recall the multitudes of landmasses and how they figured together, but the sailors of old were practiced to such a degree that they could reorient a lost vessel and chart a new bearing in good time and without the aid of instruments.

MYRIAD CLIMATES AND BIOMES

Climate conditions in the Deadfire are varied, owing in large part to the vast ocean across which the archipelago stretches. Equatorial islands on the northernmost tip are largely composed of tropical and subtropical climates. These areas are not only more densely populated and frequented, but also situated in proximity to each other, making for favorable trading routes and uncomplicated travel between major islands.

Farther to the south, arid steppes dominate some of the largest landmasses in the Deadfire, followed by regions of polar tundra as the archipelago stretches down toward Naasitaq. It would not strain credulity to find icebergs—even inhabited ones—drifting along the waters closest to the southern pole.

Diverse arrays of creatures find these climates habitable. Aquatic dragons hunt the deep ocean and nest in sea caves while their fiery cousins roost in the depths of volcanoes. Intelligent naga form tribal clusters in desert plains and rocky atolls. Even the ravenous undead make do in the region, the more intelligent variety keeping to cooler climates to preserve their degrading bodies. There is always some corner of the Deadfire that provides for nature in one form or another.



NEKETAKA

One of the largest and most densely inhabited locations in the Deadfire is Neketaka, which means “Serpent’s Head” in the Huana tongue. The island’s most prominent feature is an imposing, subtropical mountain that has evolved into a major hub of commerce, diplomacy, and intrigue.

Crumbling and ancient structures can be found in many of the Deadfire isles, but Neketaka is the only one that contains an intact city built by the ancient Huana. Generations have passed since the prominent Kahanga tribe settled in the abandoned husk of Neketaka, and the stone buildings have since been rejuvenated in the name of progress and prosperity. Both Rauatai and the Vailian Republics have carved out their own districts of the great city, where trade, defense, and other interests are represented. The Huana royalty reside on the peak of the mountain, with districts reserved for artisans, priests, foreign outposts, and laborer quarters situated along the slopes.

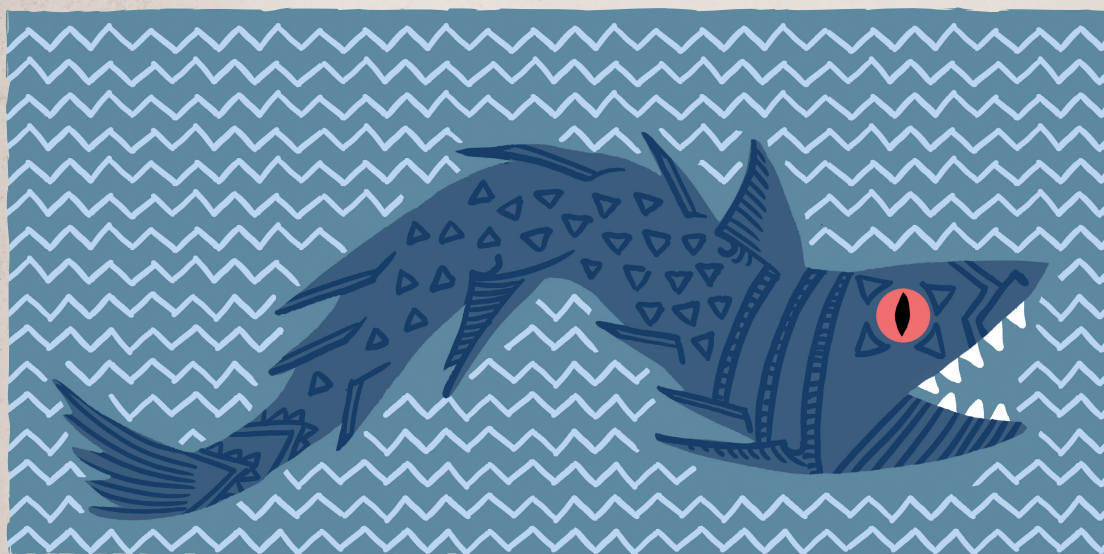
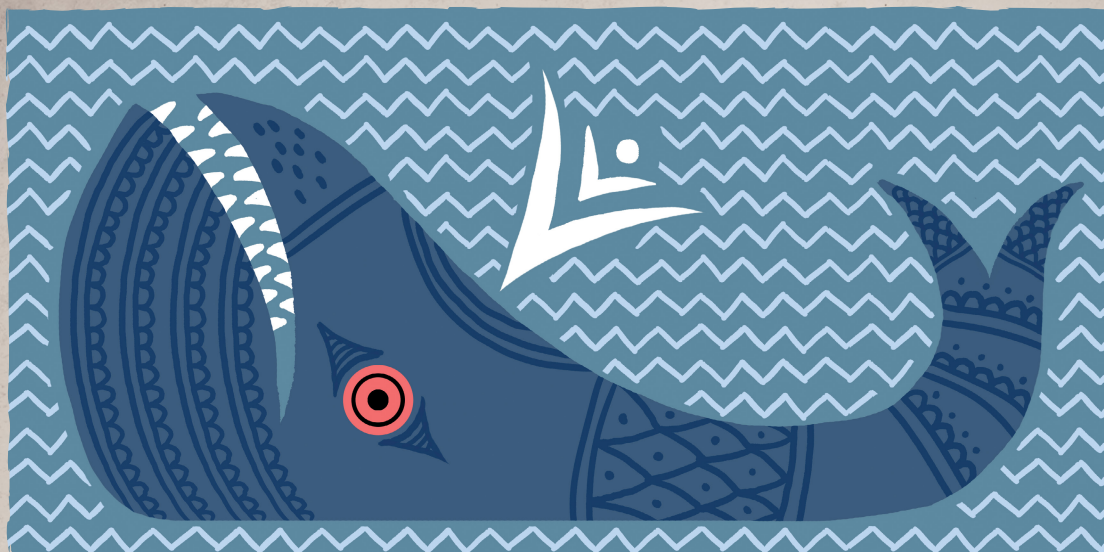
The stone lanes, towering structures, and cleanly divided districts of Neketaka fly in the face of the Huana’s traditionally tribal society, and many view the city as a dramatic shift in values. Despite its contradictions, the progress and prosperity that Neketaka has come to represent have inspired many an ambitious Huana to leave their village and embrace the city and its opportunities.

Serpent’s Crown

Neketaka’s royal district is home to the Kahanga palace and the seat of Queen Onekaza II, who rules in tandem with her brother, Prince Aruihi. Governance and diplomacy are in abundance in Serpent’s Crown, as well as wealthy estates owned by prominent and influential businesspeople.

Periki’s Overlook

The artisans’ district is home to the cultural crown of Neketaka: the Watershapers Guild. Equal parts school, museum, and archive, the guildhall showcases the mystical talents of the Huana and makes



for a dazzling fixture in the eyes of foreigners. As the watershapers are devout followers of Ondra (specifically, her Huana variant known as Ngati), the Watershapers Guild makes for an opulent sanctuary devoted to the sea.

The district also sports a bathhouse, a high-class establishment famous for its skin treatments using distilled luminous adra as a chief ingredient. Its clientele are made comfortable and given room for private dealings and discreet arrangements. Last but not least, a magic shop known as the Dark Cupboard boasts some of the most exotic and powerful goods for sale on the island. Items of incredible value are locally crafted by the resident archmage, Arkemyr, and his estate full of assisting imps.

The Brass Citadel

When Rauatai settled their naval force in the region, they carved out a section of Neketaka for their own as a defensive structure, hardly expecting to involve themselves in the city's complex political posturing. As such, the Brass Citadel is primarily a fortress with storehouses for keeping Rauatai's hardworking sailors fed, armed, and paid on the long campaign away from home.

Queen's Berth

As Vailia's ambitious trading company asserted its mercantile presence in the Deadfire, the queen of the Huana's Kahanga tribe recognized the need to keep an eye on the foreign bankers and investors. She gifted the Vailian Republics the district of the city in which their first ships made port as a welcoming gesture. Many see it as her first of many concessions to dominating foreign powers, imbuing Queen's Berth with an air of exploitation and collusion.

The Gullet

Recent struggles have displaced thousands of Huana from their home islands around the Deadfire—far more than Neketaka was ever intended to support. Those of the laboring class with little means and nowhere else to turn invariably find themselves in the Gullet—a half-collapsed portion of the city that hangs over a dark and treacherous drop.

THERE is something about this region. Each of us felt it like a distant vibration in the water: a great power to the east, turning in slumber. It possessed a force like raw, unformed potential—ready to be found, ready to be claimed, and ready to be used.

We all agreed that this presence was undeniable in its reality. We can sense it, therefore it must exist. We who have agreed on nothing before or since found immediate accord on that point . . . so why am I alone in this pursuit? Why have the others not seen fit to uproot their stagnant libraries or transplant their grand estates, as I have? Why did Concelhaut retreat into his books and Llengrath into her swamps?

Fear, perhaps. If the masters of our art are content to be ruled by their terror of the Beyond, then they do not deserve the gifts of the Deadfire. If I am alone in turning over the oldest rocks, then I alone will taste in the rewards—and the consequences, come what may. Berath visits us all in time. Not even the archmagi are immune to her insistent pounding on our doors.

—Journal of Arkemyr, master of magnetism,
lord of imps, and purveyor of fine gloves

Sea Monsters

The presence of enormous creatures in the waters of the Deadfire is undisputed. Even though there are few who have lived to witness evidence of such beasts, centuries of record and the talk of sailors have led to a culture of broad, often contradictory lore surrounding the unnamable things which patrol the deep waters.

Sailors who claimed to have spotted these many-tentacled creatures of the deep vowed that none other than Ondra could have conjured them. Because of their size and ferocity alone, few believe that leviathans occur naturally, but instead are the servants of vengeful or protective gods. The single-minded determination with which sea monsters hunt kith vessels does not help to dissuade this opinion. Priests and followers of Ondra do not refute the claim either. As the sea goddess is also one of forgetfulness, the purpose of Ondra's

servants might be long since forgotten or obsolete. Whether sea monsters hold an ancient vigil over their watery domain or are simply the product of a dark and uncaring sea is a matter for scholarly discussion.

During the early expansion into the archipelago, many of the oldest and grandest leviathans showed ferocious territoriality over the borders of the Deadfire—throwing their bodies into the paths of ships and sinking vessels with no regard for their own safety. Counterbalancing the effectiveness of these ambushes, the creatures' eagerness and lack of experience against modern ships eventually became their undoing. Once Rauatai's battle-hardened fleet knew what to expect in the waters, centuries-old beings were cannoned and harpooned to death, their bodies dragged from their native waters and cut apart for trophies, materials, and even food. Scrimshaw medallions fashioned from named beasts are a popular status token among captains and admirals.

With the eastward advance of foreigners into the Deadfire, the legend of the archipelago's great sea monsters has both swelled and sharpened in focus. Vailian and Rauataian officials pay a high bounty for evidence of a slain creature, especially ones

of notable infamy. The inevitable consequence of sending whalers and mercenaries after leviathans is that their myth shrinks to accommodate a mortal and imperfect form—never more so than when a carcass is dragged to port.

Still, the very presence of such leviathans forces cautious sailors to wonder at older and wiser beasts that have yet to make their presence known. The sinking of ships across a long voyage is a fact of life in the Deadfire, and naval veterans don't make the mistake of assuming that their prior experience will serve them in the south. Superstition holds that the Deadfire takes a tithe as payment for entry, and one never knows when their time has come until the jaws of the archipelago open up beneath them.

Magran's Teeth

Far to the northeast, the mountainous chain of Magran's Teeth defines a strict limitation for any intrepid voyagers. Whereas most of the great Deadfire volcanoes have long since calmed their explosive fury, this chain—which stretches nearly the breadth of the archipelago itself—is geologically active and viewed with incredible caution. Habitable islands are sparse and only occupied by the bravest or most fanatically pious of Huana tribes.

THE harbormaster clutched a handkerchief over his nose, but I could tell it was doing him no good. He bade us drag the sorry corpse back to open water for the sport of birds and sharks.

Hooks and nets by the dozen had hoisted our burden above deck, but time and the sea air had transformed our prize from a beauty to a horror. The glittering scales of purple and blue were encrusted with salt and rot. Her eleven—ELEVEN, Ondra as my witness—keen eyes were long since claimed by the birds, and her belly had bloated her serpentine form to the dimensions of some obscene sausage.

This, I told him, were the remains of the Screeching Fury, she whose piercing call deafened a hundred crews and sank a hundred ships. 'Twas my ingenuity which bade us plug our ears with wax to avoid the worst of the Fury's awful call, and 'twas my harpoon that pierced the brainpan in her wicked skull.

Those eyes had bored into me from the deep, seeming to shove their way into my thoughts, and produce a sadder song than the one which reached our ears... But I dared not let those thoughts haunt me any more than they had already, being in my waking and dreaming mind.

What, said I, of our bounty?

The harbormaster promised me three quarters of the bounty just to drag the sorry beast downwind of the island. Seeing as I lost a fourth of my crew bringing down the Fury, I called it a fair exchange, though it seemed a high price to pay to be rid of a stench.

May the old terror rest in peace, and may my dreams at last be quiet of her song.

—Log of Captain Mabs, Foesplitter



Many consider Magran's Teeth an obstruction to eastward expansion. While the Deadfire is the last accessible frontier, outward-facing factions with empires to build look to the days when they can chart a passage across Magran's Teeth and through Ondra's Mortar, using their island settlements as staging grounds to launch expeditions into the greater unknown. These plans are largely hypothetical and unfounded, but neither Rauatai nor the Vailian Republics are willing to let their competitor gain any advantage.

The volcanoes themselves are fiercely guarded by giants—ancient servants of Magran known as Rathun. Created for their brawn as laborers and proficient fighters, the Rathun have developed a rudimentary culture of devotion and ritual around their worship of the war goddess. Popular belief holds that their bodies were crafted of clay in the forge of the mountains and left to harden in the relentless heat of their native magma. The fires of the forge live on in their bodies, sustaining them and imbuing them with the power to draw on this divine flame in defense of their territory.

Ondra's Mortar

This massive expanse of uncharted sea is home to constant storm activity. Between the relentless hurricanes, mile-high waves, and winds that can strip the hull off any boat, Ondra's Mortar is the most hostile length of ocean known to Eora. Attempting to make the voyage through the storms to whatever sea lies beyond is nothing short of a suicide mission.

The storms of Ondra's Mortar exert a deadly force on the surrounding waters. As winds and currents stir themselves up into naturally occurring storms, the radiating energy of Ondra's Mortar feeds them, evolving otherwise insignificant wind systems into fierce and unrelenting hurricanes. The people of Rauatai know with certainty that Ondra's Mortar is responsible for some of their country's worst natural catastrophes, though such storms must cross a continent to assault their distant coasts.

Since the Deadfire's arguably most prominent, unique, and mysterious characteristic is luminous adra, Rauataian scholars believe that adra was somehow responsible for the chaotic conditions

around Ondra's Mortar. It is widely speculated that somewhere in the midst of those storms lies a wealth of luminous adra greater than any found in the Deadfire. The inaccessibility of the region means that no one can say for sure, though Rauataians and Vailians alike keep a close eye on Ondra's Mortar in case the storms should ever abate or an opening appear.

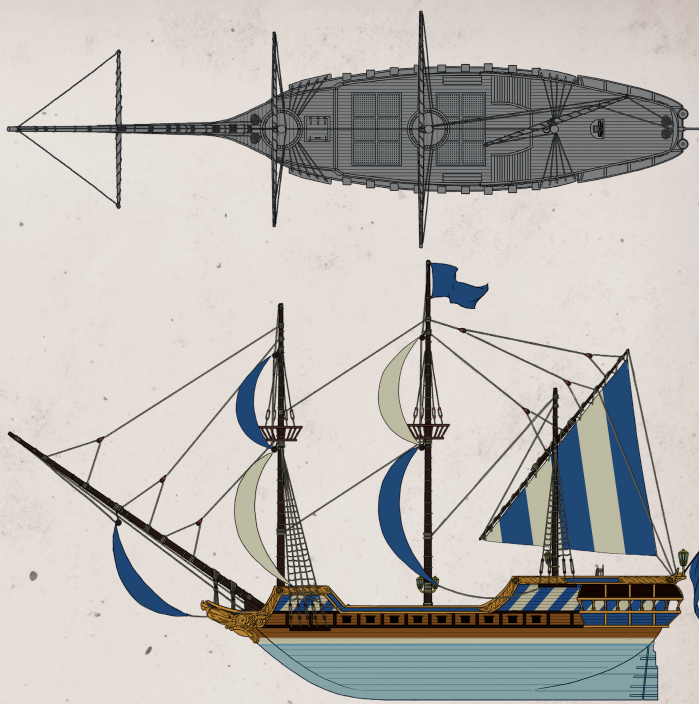
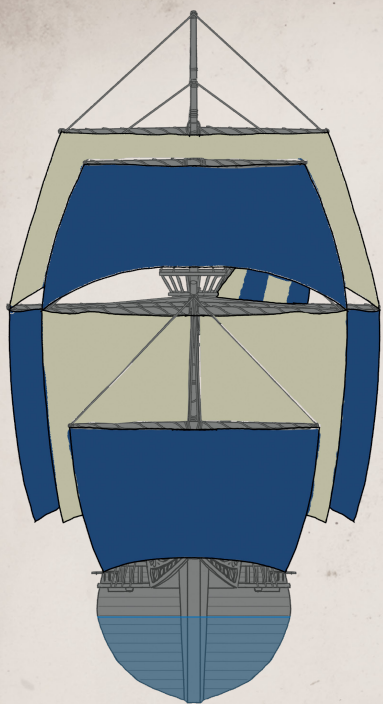
Even if the storms ceased at once, the seas of Ondra's Mortar represent several days' worth of travel in uncharted waters, and few ships would willingly make the journey. Without a bearing to guide their path, an expedition would likely end in the total demise of the crew by starvation or malnourishment, factoring in no other considerations or variables.

The Great Reef

South of the Vailian colony known as Port Maje and stretching north of the Huana city of Neketaka lies the Great Reef—a dense accumulation of coral considered to be one of the oldest and largest naturally occurring structures in all of Eora. Kith have long suspected the presence and breadth of the reef from telltale signs in clear waters as well as the flourishing ecosystem of fish and wilder creatures that call the reef home.

Its enormity was not fully appreciated until Vailian pearl divers sought to plumb stretches of the





ocean floor with the aid of diving bells. The seemingly endless expanse of growth along the sea floor inspired others to chart and better understand the reef's significance to the Deadfire region.

In addition to the diverse species of coral and other plant life that compose the reef, uncounted species of creatures inhabit every rocky burrow and anemone strand. Clustered on the sea floor and protected by the canopy of the coral squirm millions of azata snails—a fortune to the Deadfire locals who treat their glittering shells as a form of currency. Reaching the valuable gastropods through the coral itself would be little chore but for the hundreds of species of predatory eel slinking among the waters, watchful for distracted prey. Most of these eels grow no larger than a finger's length, but others have been known to span several yards, with a bite that can easily cut across a torso, or consume an orlan whole.

Sea monsters do not traditionally frequent the shallow waters of the reef, but the diversity of strange and undiscovered life forms inhabiting the coral enclosure make the term "monster" a subjective one. Although these waters are frequently navigated and considered one of the safest crossings in the Deadfire, an unspoken truth among sailors is that fortune-hunting merchants do not appropriately

fear the reef, and that many of them will learn their lesson the hardest way.

Incident at the Snail Burrow

In 2752 AI, a team of Vailian divers spotted a glittering source of color in the depths of the Great Reef. They discovered a circular burrow in the coral, which to this point lay hidden in the obscurity of a kelp forest. Once per day, the rays of the dim sunlight fell upon this opening, reflecting back colors of brilliant purple-white which were vibrant enough to view from the deck of a ship (if one knew where to look). The striking regularity of this daily pattern seemed too intentional to be a natural occurrence.

The sailors chose two of their best divers (for their lung capacity) and lowered them as close to the entrance of the burrow as the diving bell could reach. Connected at the waist by a rope, the divers swam through the entrance, noting how the walls were smoother than any surface in the reef. Once they reached the bottom, it took no time at all for them to identify the source of the eerie color.

The divers found themselves in a vast underwater chamber—at once beneath the known depths of the reef and stretching so far in all directions that it



defied the limits of their vision. What caught their attention most of all was the floor, which was littered with azata shells. "Millions" could only describe what mountainous abundance lay on the surface of the dense piles, which seemed stacked and organized with the goal of catching the daily passage of light. With what breath they had remaining, the divers scooped up armloads of shells to bring back to their ship as evidence of their find.

One of the divers tugged on his rope to signal the other that it was time to rise. To his surprise, the frayed end of the slack rope jerked back toward him with no Vailian on the other side. What he saw instead was an azata shell the size of a capsized ship—its bony surface covered in whorls of hypnotic color—and a last glimpse of his partner's limp body being dragged into its depths. He dropped the shells and kicked up for the surface in a panic, relaying his story once he made it safely aboard his ship.

After regrouping and discussing their next steps, the sailors resolved to send one more expedition

down below to confirm the sighting. Three divers went down, leaving the rest of the ship to wait in tense silence. When at last they reemerged and caught their breath, they never spoke of what they saw, though they unanimously declared that the "king below" should be left alone at all costs.

The location of the burrow was never disclosed. Many a Vailian sailor who crosses the reef will pray to Ondra for a safe and uninterrupted journey. A growing custom associated with this superstition is to drop two azata shells into the sea—one for those who have been lost, and one for the mercy of the king below.

Ngati's Temple

Nestled among the reef's natural trappings extends a bright vein of luminous adra. The Vailian Trading Company has, to this point, not permitted anyone to mine the aquatic mineral and risk the loss of equipment or manpower. This restriction has not stopped some of their more curious colleagues from taking a closer look.

Two years after the incident at the snail burrow, a team of surveyors boarded a modest ship with the purpose of mapping the length of uninterrupted adra. Following the shallows and diving periodically to reorient their bearing, the team discovered that luminous adra was present across much of the Great Reef, to the point where some of the oldest coral growths rooted and sprang up from the surface of the soul-channeling mineral.

Over the course of their study, the survey team came upon a stone ruin that had collapsed beneath the waves untold millennia ago. Among the pillars and slabs that had endured the long process of erosion, the divers found an altar with an engraved idol still standing on its base. They retrieved the statuette—a piece of adra no more than eighteen inches high, engraved in the likeness of a woman with the head of an anglerfish—and brought it aboard their ship. Their navigator, a hired tribesman from a village adjacent to their colony, cautioned the sailors against taking the idol.

Ngati, he explained, was a trickster goddess. She gave and she took in equal measure, and no amount of prayer could earn her absolute favor. He further recounted that attracting the attention of the goddess was only ever done on land, as it invited terrible risks at sea. If the goddess wanted her temple and her likeness returned to the surface, then she would have scooped the ruins up in her scaled hands and deposited them above the waves. It would have been wiser for the Vailians to dump the idol overboard and offer their sincerest apologies.

The Vailians did not heed this advice, and chided their guide for his superstition. As they continued their survey of luminous adra, the Great Reef became an increasingly unwelcome place. Fish kept their distance from the boat, reducing their food



supply. All the journals and records of their findings took an accidental tumble into the sea. Foul weather tossed them off course, and by the time they regained their bearings, every Vailian had contracted Mariner's Bowel.

As the last seaworthy sailor, the navigator steered the ship back to the site of Ngati's sunken temple—a spot his tribe had long avoided—and dumped the idol overboard with a whispered plea. He was near starving by the time he piloted the ship back to the safety of an established colony, and most of the crew had perished in their bunks.

Taking note of the navigator's relative health compared to the rest of the crew, the colonial governor arrived at a hasty conclusion. The navigator was clapped in chains and imprisoned, later to see judgment before a Vailian court. His tribe affirmed the wisdom of staying away from Ngati's fallen shrines. As relations with their colonial neighbors had begun to sour, they also whispered of the dangers inherent in accepting Vailian coin.

THESE isles are too wild and untamed by far, and choked with more ragged examples of kith than a company trading post. Look no further than the color of their flesh or the cut of garb to judge from where a woman or man hails, and is that not a comfort? The Huana—those sunrise-colored beauties—welcoming and curious and gullible. The Rauataians, cool and

isolated. How they pick me apart with their measuring gaze. At least we Vailians, for all our easy handshakes and painted smiles, do not flaunt our intentions. The pirates? Bah, you always know a pirate.

—Journal of Luca, clerk, copyist, and contractor extraordinaire





CHAPTER II
HISTORY OF THE
DEADFIRE ARCHIPELAGO

THE GREAT PUSH EASTWARD

Throughout the remembered and recorded history of Eora, civilization has progressively marched east. Aedyr transplanted its citizens and resources to eastern colonies. Old Vailia's distant settlements gradually rose up against their homeland to the southwest. Rauatai moved its armies inland and conquered the kingdoms of old. The Deadfire has come to represent the next great frontier in eastward expansion, the disputed site of uncountable riches and unknowable opportunity.

When the worldly powers of Eora simultaneously turned their focus toward the Deadfire, they interpreted the promises of the region differently. Vailia saw profit and continued dominance over world-wide trade. Rauatai saw the hope of sustenance and growth, which their empire sorely needed to thrive. The Principi saw a home that could be, and the Huana saw the home that was. As the race for prosperity gained in furious momentum, only history could judge with an unclouded lens and observe change coming to a region which had remained static long enough. The Deadfire's sleeping volcanoes became emblematic for the powder keg the region had come to represent, and everyone was scrambling to light the fuse.

TIMELINE OF THE DEADFIRE

CIRCA 2640 AI: EARLY VISITORS TO THE DEADFIRE

Up to this point in known history, the great empires of Eora had enjoyed limited contact with the people of the Deadfire. The archipelago's distance from established trading routes led many to avoid its choppy, monster-haunted waters for fear of needlessly risking their ships, crews, or cargo. Across the isles, the presence of elaborate architecture and shattered machinery points to previous occupation by the long-vanished Engwithans. Though no record accounts for the reason behind

their presence or departure, their association with the archipelago suggests a period of time spent in collaboration with the ancient Huana. What either side achieved through this partnership is not definitively known, as cataclysms rocked the Deadfire shortly after the departure of the Engwithans. For several millennia, the Huana who endured this long trial were free to keep to themselves without foreign interference.

The Grand Empire of Vailia would take another year before it began to splinter in earnest. Internal pressures and competition arose between the great wealthy houses, and the central authority of Vailia's empire was powerless to stop the culture of bloody vendetta as established families grew increasingly violent toward one another. These economically and politically uneasy conditions spurred many noble families to pack up their houses and put distance between themselves and the declining empire, sending many to begin new lives in the frontier of the Deadfire. A more violent push into the archipelago was still decades away.

Foreign voyagers who survived the journey to the archipelago spoke of a militant and xenophobic Huana tribe known as the Wahaki. Warriors of this tribe refused all offers for trade and doggedly chased outsider ships from their native waters. For a time, these experiences contributed to deep resentment toward the Huana, which would complicate later diplomatic relations. As long as foreign powers associated the Huana with their most warlike tribe, peace efforts would prove strained at best.

Tales of creatures hunting the Deadfire waters also spread with infectious sensationalism, though the shortage of firsthand sightings left some of these claims in question. Most of the ships lost in the Deadfire were attributed to storms and piracy, and most of those conclusions were accurate.

2708 AI: FORGING OF THE VAILIAN TRADING COMPANY

Years after the Vailian Republics declared their independence, the ruling ducs sought to solidify their freedom from a position of economic strength. They felt pressured to justify the worth of the young government, to reinforce a mindset of

unity and success, and most notably to ensure their future stability through robust trade. Responding to these emergent needs, the ducs sponsored the formation of the Vailian Trading Company, a conglomeration of banking and shipping interests which was privately owned and operated with the sole objective of bringing wealth to the Republics.

Though not explicitly outlined in any charter, the trading company had the freedom to do whatever it took to deliver a return on the Republics' investment. Any semblance of law in the Republics was focused on their own internal governance, with little regard given to international concerns—making the young trading company a lawless and ethically compromised endeavor from the outset. Cruelty, embezzlement, and unlawful seizure of assets amounted to only a few of the lesser offenses perpetuated in the name of the homeland. Regular manipulation of their currency's value was a financially reckless but easily accvrought coin to the burgeoning city-states, the ducs would defend and justify any act committed in the name of the Republics.

In its earliest days, the trading company profited from buying out, supplanting, and overpowering existing trade interests and striking deals to fill the manufactured gap. Regions which relied on bittersquash, svef, or saltpeter experienced few interruptions as the Vailian Trading Company occupied the vacancy they had created. As more foreign outposts bloomed, the company redirected its focus to making uncommon resources available anywhere they could reach, monopolizing rarity itself and growing every post into indispensable resources upon which many economies learned to thrive.

2720 AI: REPUBLIC DOMINANCE THROUGHOUT EORA

In no time at all, the Vailian Trading Company established permanent outposts across much of the known world—Grand Vailia, Aedyr, Rauatai, the Ixamitl Plains, the Eastern Reach, distant Naasitaq, and the Living Lands. Their relentless advance and aggressive domination over trade channels caused other imperial powers to bristle (notably Aedyr and Rauatai), as they took fewer risks abroad and

A STENCH as repugnant as a fresh grave wafted from that multicolored canopy of jungle. Whether it was morbid curiosity that compelled me forward or the depths of my mental malaise, I brought my vessel about and made for the isle marked Ori o Koiki. I had purchased the barkcloth map for a handful of snail shells, and still doubted its veracity.

No sooner had I disembarked than I was no longer repulsed by the stench, but oddly drawn in, my mouth heavy with saliva. Fruit trees of deep crimson, ripe with their pungent yield, added beauty and definition to the otherwise gloomy overgrowth. I reached up and picked one of these ripe fruits from a branch. The delicate snap of wood must have announced my presence to a nearby patrol, as I was immediately ringed about by the points of many spears. The locals wore face paint in the likeness of severe, judgmental skulls. Their expressions were no less welcoming. Would that I could recall what precision of words I used to talk my way out of that hostile first contact!

... and would that I could stop lying to myself. Babbling incoherently, I surrendered the forbidden fruit and backed away slowly toward the beach and eventually my ship. Whether it was pity or mercy which the tribe showed me, their capacity for either made for a bloodless and, admittedly cowardly, escape.

By my honor as an explorer I should preserve every detail of the voyage. By my honor as a writer of scrolls which people are expected to read, I will strike that section from the final version when it goes to my publisher.

—Excerpt from Fulvano's log of the Deadfire

lacked the commitment for a similar undertaking.

The Republics had the advantage of a failing empire's trade agreements and the wealth of noble families. Internal competition and the desire to establish family names and connections fueled the expansion of the trading company with incredible momentum.

ABOY visited my office holding palmfuls of what passes for currency on his side of the world. Without understanding the terms of release, his chieftain had signed away all right to their tribal land. And what did he take in exchange but a mere certificate of trading permissions along an already overused merchant route! Belfetto, every day we demonstrate the power of ink and parchment over traditional arms. I would pay a man his weight in azata shells if he could show me a nation that weaponized commerce as efficiently as we do.

A pity that our Rauataian neighbors ignore the example and stretch their resources along such tight margins. Their soldiers, colonists, and even cannons must be constantly nourished and maintained with goods that no one on this side of the world possesses. By the time we have pulled away from these islands, Rauatai will have gained nothing but an iron shortage and some unwelcome diseases. We will be rich beyond imagining.

It goes without saying that I had the meddlesome islander escorted back to the docks. The signatory of his “disagreeable” agreement I had promoted for his diligent paperwork. It is not our fault if these degenerates fail to understand the contracts they sign.

—Luca’s Report of Earnings,
Progress, and Company Satisfaction, Vol. XIV

2720–2760 AI: EXODUS AND EVOLUTION

As the collapse of Grand Vailia continued apace, the last of the noble houses pulled up stakes and fled the diminishing empire. Many ships of expatriate wealthy families sought refuge in the Deadfire, where they intended to establish new lives as merchants selling the assets of their emptied estates. What they found was no encouragement. Vailia’s decline had left the empire’s trading network to the east vulnerable, and both Republic and Rauataian interests in the region made a hostile climate for any would-be competitors. The exiled families had arrived too late to

reap the Deadfire’s wealth of opportunity. Their businesses suffered, and poverty loomed on a nearing horizon.

One by one, the exiles resorted to piracy in order to sustain themselves. Even in these desperate circumstances, every member of the fleet cleaved to a shared sense of loyalty. Their fellowship demonstrated the first sign of the Vailian class structure’s fracturing, as old families were able to look beyond their blood and recognize each other as countrymen.

2742 AI: DWARVEN EXPLORERS OPEN TRADE WITH THE HUANA

As more Vailians poured into the Deadfire, it became a priority to forge trade routes with the locals. Ships full of dwarven explorers made port in a small island and established Balefire Beacon, a stone lighthouse and defensive tower, as their permanent outpost. The dwarves held an uneasy alliance with the Huana as they learned to appreciate each other’s resourcefulness. For a time, it seemed that their alliance would endure as one of the rare profitable and amicable trade deals made between foreigners and the tribes.

Unfortunately, the dwarves arrived woefully unprepared for the wilder creatures which protected the isles—sea monsters, naga, and the undead. One day the tides shifted against the settlement’s favor, discharging hundreds of coral naga onto the beaches. The creatures led a spirited assault on the dwarves of Balefire Beacon—which was doomed, but an effective test of their adversary’s endurance. As the settlers regrouped and bandaged their wounds, the night brought guls and fampyrs from an undiscovered sea cave. It seemed that their home had risen against them all at once, eager to be rid of a foreign pest.

The last survivors of the settlement boarded up their homes and left Balefire Beacon abandoned. None could say what happened to those who sailed away from the once-promising outpost. The fires of the lighthouse, which were supposed to guide their compatriots, went cold, sending many travelers off course to uncertain fates.

2750 AI: THE OPENING OF PORT MAJE

After relentlessly hammering at the Huana to accept their trade agreements, the Vailian Republics succeeded in establishing their first permanent settlement: Port Maje. The colony staked its claim on a small island on the southern edge of the archipelago despite its being occupied by a Huana tribe. The outpost was modest by the standard of later installations, but the Vailians regarded it with great significance for being their first major foothold in the region. The Republics would later use Port Maje as a waypoint for ships voyaging to more prosperous frontiers. Peace with the local tribe endured because the Huana did not fully grasp the foreigners' concept of landownership—a pattern that would grow more evident as time passed and more islands were absorbed.

2758 AI: THE ROYAL DEADFIRE COMPANY PUSHES INTO THE DEADFIRE

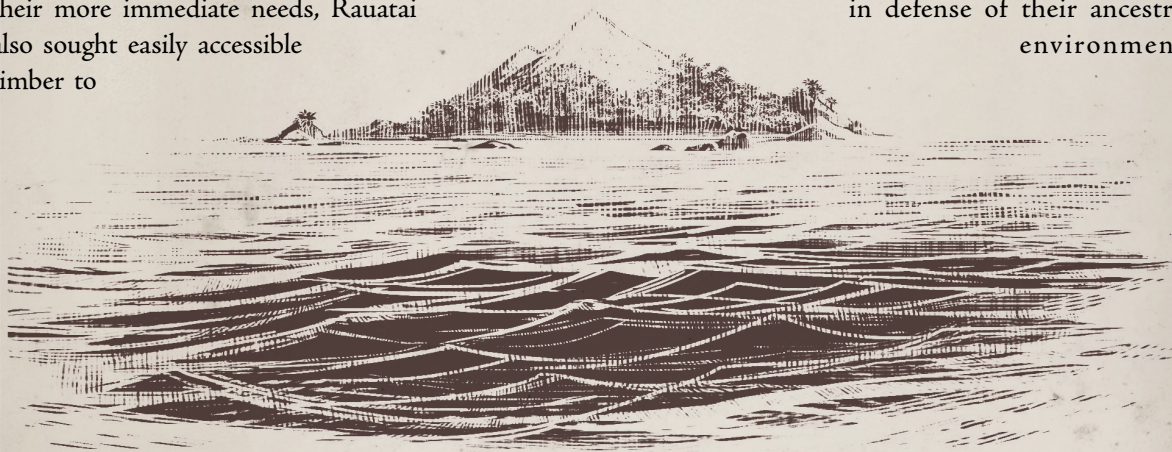
With trading routes becoming increasingly profitable on the treacherous frontier, Rauatai scrambled to catch up to the Republics' steep advantage. Rauatai's emperor, the ranga nui, turned his focus to the islands themselves and the soil which was ripe for tilling and cultivation. Rauatai's lands were largely infertile, and foreign trading deals supplied much of the country's provisions, making the breadbasket of the Deadfire all the more appealing as a prospect for the future of Rauatai's growing empire. Among their more immediate needs, Rauatai also sought easily accessible timber to

supply their shipwrights with materials to maintain their naval strength.

Some of the more unusual weather activity caught the ranga nui's attention as well, the storms about Ondra's Mortar being especially significant. He and his weather seers sought to understand what made the Deadfire so remarkable that such furious storms could persist uninterrupted. One of many speculative conclusions suggested that the Deadfire's abundance of luminous adra contributed to the anomaly, though none could guess how. Until they could understand more, all that stood in the ranga nui's path was the uphill battle of competing against the Vailian Republics. Their trading company had already formed an unbreakable monopoly around worldwide merchant routes, and he did not want a repeat of this to occur in the Deadfire while he could stop it.

The ranga nui gathered the strength of his country's naval fleet as the raw material to form and empower the Royal Deadfire Company. Under their imperial charter, the company sailed east, driven by their new mission to take control of the Deadfire before it could slip from their grasp forever. This move drew great praise from the Rauataian public, wayfaring and conquest being prominent in their cultural heritage, and attracted many to enlist for the glory of their country. A mixture of propaganda and homegrown pride meant that everyone wanted to do their part for the good of Rauatai.

In their eagerness to grab unclaimed land in the name of the homeland, the trading company ran afoul of the archipelago's less welcoming residents. Deadfire creatures who bristled at the military incursion (chiefly the snake-like naga) organized in defense of their ancestral environment.





The Royal Deadfire Company found themselves outnumbered by tricky and strategic foes, though never outclassed. Rauataian weapons were second to none, and the ranga nui demanded that no warship go without cannons, hoping that intimidation alone could win a portion of the battles ahead of them.

Kith strategy did not interest the naga, and cannons were of little concern when the creatures could slither by the hundreds onto decks. In spite of their enthusiasm, naga archers and swordsmen stood little chance against the rifles of Rauatai's armory. Regular conflicts between the mismatched foes culminated in a loss of life on both sides in addition to enmity that persisted across the entire campaign. As they gradually fell before the superior might and strategy of the Rauataians, tribes of naga were forced from their island caves, burrows, and ancient temples. From distant retreats, the intelligent creatures of the Deadfire cursed all foreigners, their mastery of black powder, and the Huana who failed to protect the archipelago.

News of this incursion spread slowly among Huana tribes, their hands already full with the burden of Vailian diplomacy. Once the central authority of the tribes recognized the threat at their doorstep, the most decisive day of conflict came when the Wahaki tribe rose up against the Royal Deadfire Company. In the aftermath of a bloody naval battle (see The Battle of Nakaro Atoll), Rauatai dominated the seas and the once-proud tribe lay decimated. The Huana were not without the power to fight back, and reprisal was nigh.

2801 AI: THE WATERSHAPERS' REVITALIZATION

Accepting their inability to hold back the tide of Vailians and Rauataians into their homeland, the Huana turned to their watershapers for aid. The masters of the guild were largely Storm Speakers responsible for keeping the seas and weather around villages in an orderly state. It only took a shift in perspective for them to adapt the same skills toward the defense of the isles.

When relations with colonial powers grew strained or violent, the watershapers were called upon as royal retainers. They commanded the seas

to rise and devour foreign ships, flood colonies, or interrupt the tides at a moment's notice. The loss of cargo, resources, and capable sailors threatened to destabilize all settlement efforts, giving both Vailian and Rauataian trading companies cause to take stock of their one-sided relations with the Huana. As violence between kith escalated, the mere sight of an approaching Huana vessel was enough to send hardened veterans scrambling in their haste to retreat.

Throughout all the posturing and demonstration of their abilities, the Huana fought to suppress the reality that their watershapers were few and far between. Though watershaping was considered the greatest achievement of their ancestors, few modern Huana grasped the complexity of the ritualistic forms and mindsets needed to exercise this talent to its greatest known capacity. The oldest guild histories tell of the ancient Huana's mastery over the art, but such lessons were lost or suffered gradual decline after millennia of forgetfulness.

The watershaping art made a sudden, fortuitous turnaround and experienced a resurgence of efficacy under the tutelage of Guildmaster Periki. Shortly after she assumed a leadership position in the guild, students found themselves able to achieve complicated forms with minimal strain. More acolytes graduated to become Storm Speakers than ever in recorded history. Many took this miraculous reversal of fortunes as a sign of Ngati's favor toward the chosen people of the Deadfire.

How Periki accomplished the deed is not known, though students would whisper that subsequent guildmasters inherited the secret of Periki's strength. Foreign authorities would never again underestimate the power of the Huana, though they were watchful for any weakness or fracturing in the native ranks. The Watershapers Guild grew in power and esteem, rising to become one of the most important fixtures in Neketaka, if not the whole of the archipelago.

2818 AI: HASONGO ESTABLISHED

Seeking to spread their influence in the region, but hesitant to incur the anger of the Huana, the Royal Deadfire Company shifted their focus away from

Huana-occupied lands for a time. Warships armed with cannons and explosives set a course for the reef of Hasongo, a shallow port with a prominent pillar of luminous adra that could serve as a navigational beacon for incoming ships. The naga who occupied Hasongo for untold generations objected to this incursion. Since their appeals fell on deaf ears, hostilities broke out in short order. This time Rauatai learned from the lesson of Nakaro Atoll and arrived to the battlefield overprepared, routing the naga with ease. After the dust settled, the colonial settlement of Hasongo was firmly established, and the adra was converted into a lighthouse that guided countless warships safely to the archipelago.

2819 AI: RICHES TO THE EAST

During the early Vailian advance into the Deadfire, explorers took note of the fact that the islands were sparsely settled by outside powers. Research and excavation teams made the journey in search of gold or precious gems to be mined for the profit of the homeland. Specialists and laborers arrived at a trickle, as there was little evidence of wealth besides the islands themselves, which were considered at the time too dangerous and costly to hold.

In the midst of a leisurely survey of soil and rock samples, a shard of adra caught the attention of a novice animancer named Irassa. She had observed the curious blue-green glow of the local mineral during the voyage, and this was her first opportunity to study it closely. What grabbed her interest was not only the glow of the adra, but how her animantic devices responded to its presence.

Luminous adra affected her copper instruments to the point of causing them to shiver in their containers. The glass panel of a modest soul dowsing shattered, indicating an abundance of soul energy that was beyond the ability of her instruments to measure. Keeping her discoveries a secret, Irassa surreptitiously ordered a variety of supplies from the Republics. She spent weeks studying further samples, which involved some dangerous forays in the wild. With the company's approval, she organized survey expeditions whose objectives were intentionally made vague to the rest of the

explorers. Once she determined that the results were conclusive, Irassa wrote a thorough paper of her findings, which received wide circulation in the Republics.

Irassa wrote of the abundance of soul energy present in Deadfire adra, which had the potential to augment the work of Vailian animancers by providing them with the raw materials needed for deeper research. In an early draft of her papers, she wrote of a process by which adra could be distilled into a liquid form. Applied to the skin, this concentration of soul essence was absorbed into the subject, who retained a youthful appearance and enjoyed increased vitality. The whole process was a mere footnote to her other findings, and yet it earned the rapt attention of the Republic ducs, who compensated Irassa for the discovery, but forced her to edit out her findings in a subsequent revision. The ducs quickly recognized that the distillation of luminous adra would prove to be their most valuable secret, and was worth protecting from those who might otherwise seek to profit from it.

The rejuvenating benefits of luminous adra meant that the mineral was of interest to more than just studious animancers. If the Vailian Republics could control this resource, the refinement process, and its distribution across Eora, they stood to make more money off the arrangement than they could tally. Their investment, which had been cumbersome up to this point, would eventually come to represent a bucket of water compared to a vast ocean of potential profit.

A new and promising economic shift toward the distillation and trade of luminous adra came to feverishly occupy the minds of enterprising Vailians. The ducs collectively financed further expansion of the Vailian Trading Company's assets, and instructed their trading interests around the globe to refocus all efforts onto the Deadfire Archipelago. Banks not previously allied to the trading company bought their way into the fold, intent on sharing in the limitless yield to come.

Irassa's dogged persistence in the face of uncertainty is credited with transforming the Deadfire from a modest trading outpost to the hub of the Republics' economy.

OUR resident tinker stops the party every fifteen paces to study the soil, the trees, a flower—anything she can get her hands on. All the while I am cradling my rifle, studying the reflection of too many eyes among the trees. The men begin to worry, so I put my questions to Captain Faran, asking her yet again what we seek in this god-scorned jungle.

“Whatever she can find,” she said, gesturing at the tinker. Irassa was taking scrapings of moss from a stone bird. How she earned the confidence to finance this glorified nature walk I may never understand. The captain reminded me that the company would take care of us, so I need not worry over my skin, my soul, or the weight of my purse.

Irassa silenced us with a look and a raised finger. What parody of order was this chain of command?

We crept forward, flanking the tinker at every step. In time, the chittering of jungle birds grew quiet, and silence fell over the canopy.

A few paces later, we saw the pillars of light. I had touched adra shipped from the Dyrwood colony, seen wagonloads of it cross our borders, but this was something different. Beautiful, jutting from the earth like a pair of tusks. The ruins were built up around this unbelievable growth as if in reverence to it.

Irassa told us all that we were going to be very, very rich. For the first time in the journey, I believed her.

—Expedition log, Vailian Trading Company

2823 AI: THE HOLLOWING OF THE DYRWOOD

Far north of the Deadfire, in the territory known as the Eastern Reach, an epidemic of incredible proportions swept across the former Aedyran colony known as the Dyrwood. Eothas, the god of light and rebirth, had taken mortal form to rally the zealots of Readceras into forming an army. After his defeat and the subsequent destruction, a generation of Dyrwoodan children came into the world without souls. Scholars, priests, and animancers hotly debated whether Eothas was punishing citizens of the Dyrwood in this “Hollowborn” crisis, or if his death had somehow interrupted the reincarnation cycle.

How this crisis came to a close is something of a mystery, but evidence points to the intervention of a newcomer to the Dyrwood—the master of Caed Nua and a Watcher (one who sees between life and death, and can commune with souls) who earned no small acclaim over the course of their travels. Shortly after this figure’s arrival, the cycle of reincarnation resumed as normal, and children were once more born into the world alive and healthy.

2828 AI: THE ADRA COLOSSUS

Shortly after the Hollowborn crisis came to a close, the keep of Caed Nua had achieved an aura of order and peace, which came to replace the superstition and unease that pervaded the old estate for centuries. All of this came to a swift end when a colossal statue of adra—seven hundred feet in height and as solid as a mountain—burst from under the ancient grounds, shattering the old keep and killing every member of the household. The giant of intricately engraved adra marched toward the sea, making his way east with relentless determination. What he sought on the frontier of the archipelago was anyone’s guess, but the mass exploitation and popularity of luminous adra left some to wonder if the events were in any way related.

It is said that the master of Caed Nua was also killed during this unexpected uprising, though more recent reports of activity to the east have put that claim into question.



A dramatic illustration of a man on a ship at sunset. The man, with a beard and wearing a green cloak, is shown in profile, looking out over the sea. He is holding a fishing net and a pipe. The ship's rigging is visible in the foreground. In the background, there are rocky islands and a small sailboat on the water. The sky is filled with colorful clouds, and the overall mood is serene yet adventurous.

CHAPTER III
PEOPLE OF THE DEADFIRE

NATIONS

History has shown that the archipelago cannot sustain peace when more than a single world power occupies it. Conflicts over lands, resources, and opportunities are fought with dogged persistence, the cost of resolution often weighed in lives rather than coin. The struggle is no deterrent to those who stake everything on the chance to plant their flag in the Deadfire. Four factions rally their forces and assemble their arms to defend their claim over the islands, but only one can be named victor.

HUANA

- ♦ **LANGUAGES:** Huana, Aedyran
- ♦ **POPULATION:** Ten million aumaua, significantly fewer numbers of boreal dwarves, pale elves, and orlans (less than 1%).
- ♦ **GOVERNMENT:** Self-governing tribes on the local level and a regency of mixed authority stemming from the prominent Kahanga tribe.
- ♦ **PROMINENT DEITIES:** Galawain, Ngati (Ondra), Amira (Hylea), Rikuhu (Berath)

In the native tongue of the Deadfire locals, the term “Huana” describes a decentralized population of aumaua. Taken from the broad perspective of history, this definition is a fitting approximation



of Huana culture. Though the tribes share similarities in essentials like biology (being primarily composed of aumaua), they are often distinct from each other in custom, tradition, and geography. Island living has contributed to the Huana's celebratory expression of their indistinct boundaries in a context where neighbors can be as different from each other as any two cultures of Eora.

Aumaua have lived in the Deadfire for at least five thousand years, with the warm-toned island aumaua being the most abundantly represented. Far to the northwest of the Deadfire, in distant Rauatai, the cool-toned coastal aumaua are more prevalent.

Very ancient voyage logs tell that modern Rauataians sprang from the tribes of the Deadfire long ago, from which their ancestors emigrated in order to establish their future empire. What force or influence so divided the Huana into distinct nations is not conclusively known, but oral history and geological evidence points toward a natural cataclysm which hit the Deadfire with enough force to scatter its ancient inhabitants.

Though legends diverge on many of the particulars, every Huana tribe possesses an ancestral story describing a catastrophe that swept across the Deadfire. Tidal waves drowned villages and cities, incredible storms leveled what settlements escaped the flooding, and every horizon turned black with volcanic ash. Enough time has passed that the worst

YOU wish me to blunt my teeth with that old tale? Ekeru, so be it. Grandfather told it in the words of his grandfather, twisted by forgetfulness and far removed from the source. I will do his imperfect words no justice.

The black wings of Amira spread wide across the sky, darkening the day and turning all heads to the north. Winds of fire knocked over the tallest huts like piles of straw, igniting all in their wake. The earth cracked under the tribe's feet as Ngati tore at the roots of the island. The priests read the omens and foretold change in the Deadfire, but the cleaving of the horizon

and the approaching swell of the sea was beyond any of their predictions.

Our fathers' fathers and mothers' mothers fled inland, and the sea chased them up the mountain. By the time they reached the peak, a tenth of them lived to tell of it. They say that every story is shaped by perspective. Well, on that day, the Huana were united in terror, and shared the same tale.

Ekeru, enough of that—the children have nightmares enough already.

—Local legend scribbled in the margins
of a Rauataian census log



of the damage is long since overwritten, the evidence left for future generations to interpret or overlook.

Whatever happened in those dark times, it cut off the Huana from their history. The decimation of their people silenced oral tradition for a generation or more, and few documented accounts of the ancient

tribes survived to speak for the dead. For millennia to come, the postcataclysm Huana would wander the isles and struggle in vain to assemble an echo of what their civilization had been. Their efforts to survive were more successful than their efforts to recall and rebuild. To this day, living as a Huana of the Deadfire comes with an element of sorrow directed toward the magnitude of history and culture the archipelago buried under turbulent seas.

Castes

Within any given tribe, the Huana divide themselves along the lines of a rigidly enforced caste system. This organization has been honed over millennia, reinforced by the Huana's sacred regard for Berath's Wheel and the cycle of reincarnation.

♦ MATARU At the top of the structure, the Mataru are the warrior and priest class of a Huana tribe. Priests are responsible for every level of religious engagement, from the interpretation of omens to the guiding of prayer and exploration of past lives. They also act as advisers and representatives of divine intention, guiding the tribe in any matter that would require the opinion of the gods.

This broadly defined authority extends to the organization of the caste system. Using a combination of ritual, prayer, and rods of dragon or adragan bone, priests measure the souls of Huana newborns to observe the vibrancy of their infant souls. The bones used in these rituals are nearly impossible to acquire without significant risk, which explains why the tools in circulation have been passed down across generations. Other tribes



have fashioned the same materials into bells or wind chimes, which carry out identical functions, though the rituals differ. How any of these traditions work in a practical sense is beyond the comprehension of modern animancers.

Through this mandatory ritual, priests determine where the Huana newborn fits in the great structure of tribal society. It is uncommon for a child to be placed in a lower or higher caste than their parents, but such disruptions of the social order do happen, and have even halted old and powerful chieftain dynasties.

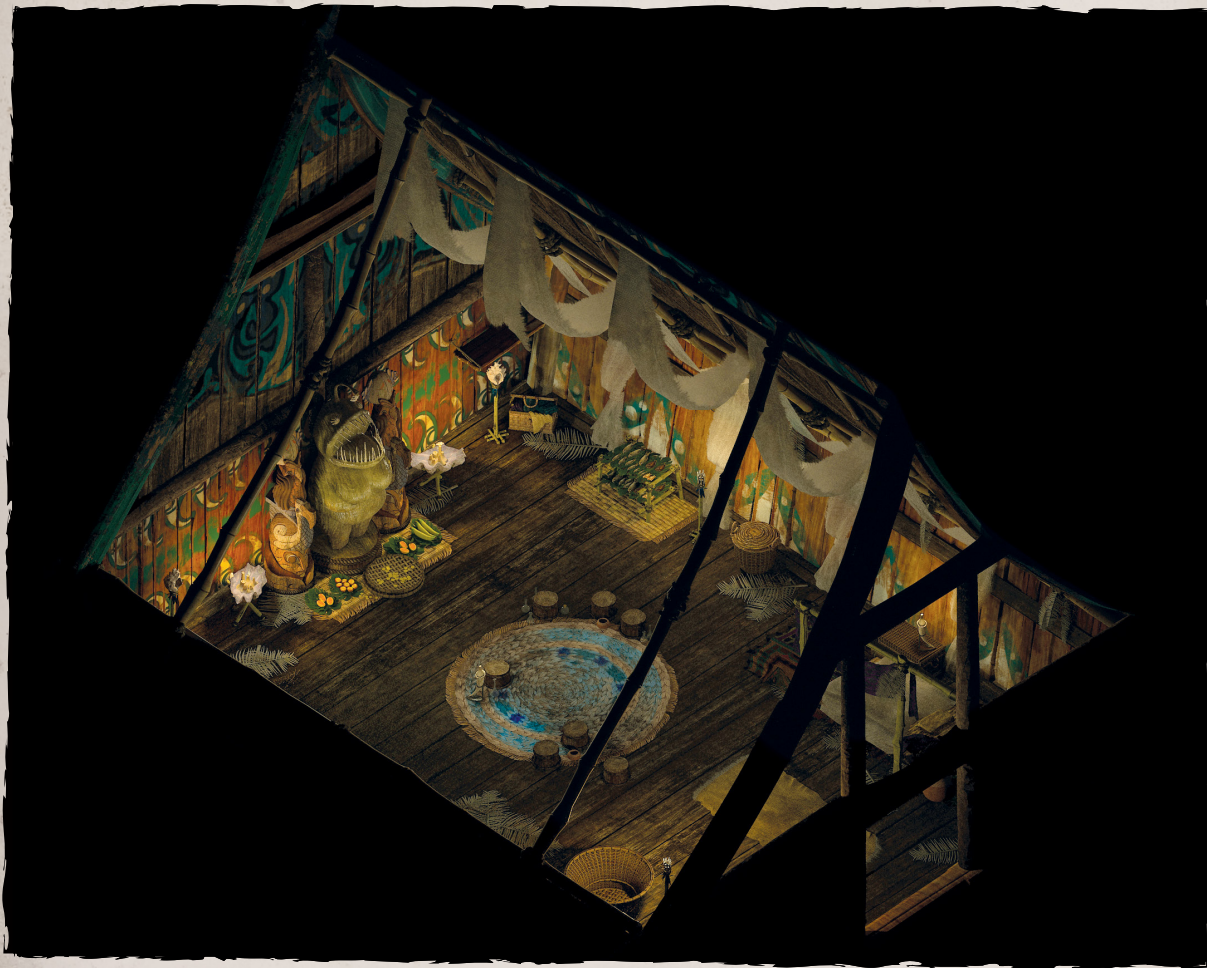
Within the Mataru, warriors are responsible for the protection and guidance of a tribe's more practical concerns. Chieftains most commonly spring from the warriors, as their physical strength and tactical reasoning are meant to represent the strength of the tribe. While heritage is a factor in the lines of succession, the vigor of the chieftain heir is taken into account through a combination of priestly rituals and physical trials before they are allowed to ascend. If the heir is found lacking in essentials, then the eligible warriors compete for the

WHAT do you mean by "tolerate"? What say? When I look to the Roparu, I see sisters and brothers who raised my hut, who made trails to the good fishing spots, and dragged wagons of koiki across the sand. Why would I deny them a place around the fire?

All are welcome to enjoy warmth and sing the song of their family, our shared past, and the future to come. This is the way of our people, not my tribe alone. As we die and return wearing the faces of our new lives, our sisters and brothers may look in our eyes and see the history of the tribe reflected back at them. Is this not done in Rauatai?

We cherish this. We learn from this. So why do you build walls around us?

—Chieftain interview, written by scribe
Tamoā of Hazanui Karū's flagship



right to lead. Both men and women can serve as chieftains, provided they are part of the Mataru caste.

Even with the authority they wield, priests have a history of standing in uneasy opposition to the warriors, most notably around the question of caste placement. If a chieftain's newborn heir is judged unworthy of the Mataru class, the chieftain may refute the ruling of the gods and demand a new set of trials and augury. Priests are susceptible to intimidation, exile, or even execution if their judgment is put into question and enough influential voices are rallied against them.

♦ **KUARU** The Kuaru class is reserved for respectable artisans and merchants. Within the Kuaru, a child will most often take up the vocation of their parents, unless there is a surplus in one practice and a gap needing to be filled elsewhere. The differences are not made up by personal choice or innate talent, but by the guidance of the Mataru.

♦ **ROPARU** The Roparu are the unskilled laborers of Huana society who work the more menial jobs that are nevertheless essential to Deadfire life. This class serves an unforgiving but important survival role. During lean times, when harvests fail or food is simply wanting, the Roparu are those designated to go hungry, even to the point of death by starvation. Outsiders may view this structure and its responsibilities with disapproval, but even the Roparu do not question their place in the order of society. It is known and accepted that the souls of the Roparu will be reborn to the tribe at a loftier caste, as the gods recognize their labor and toil.

The City

Nowhere else in the Deadfire are the castes more clearly divided than in the city of Neketaka. The ruling Mataru of the Kahanga tribe established their seat in the palace district of Serpent's Crown at the top of the mountain, where the queen and prince maintain diplomatic relations with outsiders and execute tribal law. Kuaru artisans enjoy renown in Periki's Overlook on the steep slope of the mountain—the locus of culture in Neketaka, where poetry and sculpture mix with commerce and comfort. The Roparu subsist in the relative obscurity of the Gullet, their community suspended just over a waterlogged ruin. These living conditions are irregular when set against the

generations of tribal culture, where the castes are all represented in a spirit of togetherness, but they are the unusual result of organizing labor, culture, and diplomacy in a settlement based around walls and paved lanes.

Over time, the social geography of Neketaka has proven a source of challenge and bitter division—both within the Kahanga tribe and among the Huana as a whole. Though it stands as a beacon of hope and progress, Neketaka nevertheless remains a violent departure of Huana norms, leaving many to wonder if the city and its centralized power are worth compromising the decency of their people. These problems are only exacerbated by the presence of the Vailian Trading Company and the Royal Deadfire Company, whose occupation of districts forced Huana communities to relocate in the increasingly crowded city.

WHEN the Roparu envoy told my queen of the bloated bellies and moaning children in the Gullet, Onekaza had the good sense to raise her brows and wear a mask of astonishment. She is not ignorant of the food shortage, but her lack of solutions should not be made common knowledge. She has pored over plans and heard ideas behind closed doors for months now.

To let it go unchecked is a weakness that the trading companies would exploit. Stopping it drains resources that she needs elsewhere. Onekaza is hemmed in on all sides with impossible choices, but that is a queen's worry to bear. I would wish it on no one but my worst enemy.

Gasps erupted from the courtiers when Onekaza, setting aside all grace and dignity, rose from her throne and hoisted the poor man to stand tall and proud. The famine was over, she promised, and feast would come. She dined with him in the palace and gave him quarters for the evening.

He returned home with a full belly and a full heart, but empty hands.

—Personal diary of Waina,
notary of the Kahanga court

Fostering

Children born within villages are primarily raised by their birth parents, but it is the responsibility of the tribe to nurture and educate the young. Relatives may accept children into their household for learning vocations or deepening their understanding of folklore. Within the Mataru, the chief-tain heir is responsible for fostering and training the most promising warriors, while the eldest priest prepares the minds of those designated to rule with years of careful instruction.

Nomadism

Millennia of island living has contributed to a largely transient and mobile culture among the

Huana—particularly those tribes which subsist on hunting and gathering. When the resources of an area have diminished, it is common for the tribe to migrate to another side of the island. If the island itself is depleted, the tribe will uproot their settlement and sail to another nearby habitable land-mass, often repeating this cycle in chains of islands known for their regularity and dependability. This pattern is critical to Deadfire survival, as it offers the islands time to replenish the very resources that sustain Huana living.

Mobility has discouraged most modern Huana from building with stone or any sense of permanence. Concepts like walls or fortresses are viewed with confusion and disdain, often serving as impediments



IT is said that the Huana carry history wherever they voyage—that it lives in the voice of every elder and the heart of every child. A pity that we water down the truth with comforting lies! We do not know ourselves, and we make it up as we go.

Tales of birds, snakes, and dead warriors have not helped us to stand tall against our foes. We do not build, fight, or think as they do—ekera, a blessing and a curse. We are vulnerable to outsiders, and it would be folly to ignore this. Our control over Ngati's realm will not save us if we cannot save ourselves.

There is a place where our stories began, where our history can still be found, and where we are bound to return. A place where we left our strength behind. It is more important than any person, any story, or any tribe.

I only hope that we get there first.

—Musings on Ukaizo,
by Guildmaster Daipara

to the beach or the casual freedom of movement. A tribe that seeks protection will go inland, using natural barriers and elevation to their advantage. The more isolationist tribes will avoid the shore altogether, using mountain caves, ancient ruins, or a combination of both to house their people.

The need to pack lightly has deeply impacted the Huana's treatment of landownership and worldly

possessions. Heavy or nonessential goods are luxuries reserved for the Mataru, while the Kuaru are expected to keep only their tools, and the Roparu are made to transport food and building materials. In this quality, the contrast between tribal living and the great city of Neketaka is obvious. Permanent settlements forge a reliance on goods imported to the island and the influence of outside economies, leaving the Huana more vulnerable to food shortages as well as the political maneuverings of the trading companies.

Written records are largely devoted to tracking the seasons, observing the migration of animals, cataloging changes in the weather, and notating the position of the stars. Consequently, the Huana know their history through stories and a rich oral tradition passed down the generations. The most recent advances in recordkeeping have taken place on Neketaka, where the Watershapers Guild holds a dense library of research and reflections on Huana history.

• **PRODUCTS:** Barkcloth, luminous adra, timber, koiki fruit

Luminous adra is not the Huana's resource to sell, but this has not stopped Vailian interests from treating it as such. The tribes widely consider themselves the keepers and protectors of the Deadfire's native adra, and the thought of exploiting it for profit is a foreign and unwelcome concept. Nevertheless, Vailian traders seeking to mine and refine vast quantities of luminous adra established a legal precedent that the Huana, as keepers of the Deadfire, are keepers of the adra on their ancestral lands.

IDREAMED again of fallen Ukaizo. Waves lapped at a coastline of stone ruins. The city was waterlogged as ever. An eroded statue held open her arms in greeting, standing sentry before a barred entrance. In all my years, I have never crossed the mighty gates of Ukaizo. I could see all the familiar paved lanes and impressive spires beyond, at once empty and welcoming. They desired new footprints to sign the dust with some evidence that the city endured, that it could sustain life once again. I had always thought those footprints would be mine . . .

When I reached for the gate, the statue touched me by the shoulder—lightly, but with insistence. She

whispered that it was not for me to cross that threshold. Not now, and perhaps not ever.

Confused, I asked who, if not the Kahanga queen, was worthy of this honor? Who was destined to stride through the barrier separating us from lost Ukaizo?

But the statue spoke no more. The spray of a powerful wave moistened the corners of her eyes, and I awoke with tears in my own.

The priests will not hear of this. My people need more hope than I can offer, and there are some omens which should go ignored.

—The Dream Journal of Onekaza II



Koiki is a native fruit found in tropical regions. The koiki tree has striking red leaves and pungent fruits which give off an odor which foreigners typically find detestable. Outsiders have taken to calling it “corpsefruit” with an air of disdain, though locals treat it with reverence. Given the struggle and inconsistency of finding resources to sustain a tribe, the presence of densely grown koiki groves has meant the difference between life and death for some of the Deadfire’s most prominent tribes, namely the Kahanga and the Wahaki.

♦ **VIRTUES:** Honesty, bravery, strength of soul, utility, self-sacrifice

The Huana who are praised and remembered are not necessarily the heroes or strong individualists, but those who unceasingly serve their tribe to the best of their abilities. A few notable figures have distinguished themselves over the years for accomplishing great tasks, but these were always done in the name of strengthening the tribes or helping other Huana to survive hardship.

♦ **VICES:** Indecisiveness, laziness, selfishness

Given the priesthood’s ability to divine the potential of an infant, the earliest assumptions about a person are expected to carry on throughout their life. In this self-correcting system, a child destined to be a woodcarver will face scrutiny and judgment if they show signs of pursuing another craft. Vocation is a tribesman’s way of demonstrating their worth to the community, and showing any ambition contrary to their defined pursuit is to place themselves ahead of the tribe.

Myths of the Huana

♦ **UKAIZO** Ruins scattered about the archipelago point to the Huana once existing as a centralized, advanced, and altogether more unified people than they are today.

Elaborate architecture, keen navigational charts, and even findings of epic poetry can only suggest the depths of what the Huana have lost over the years. This incongruity between the past and the present has come to define one of the central pillars of their cultural values—that they were once a greater people, and only by engaging with their history can they recover the mislaid strengths.

Chief among their lost accomplishments stands Ukaizo, an island paradise and the capital city of the Huana’s former imperial power. Ukaizo is the focal point of the oldest Huana tales, and acts as the hub around which many of their legends revolve. The same devastation which decimated the Huana and changed the face of the Deadfire is credited with hiding

A CHILD was born in the jungle—blue skinned and oily as a seal. His eyes are so wide that they cannot blink, and his mother moistens them with drippings from a cloth.

I fear this son of Ngati. Our lands are desolate, the fish retreat, and the koiki wither on the branch. For the goddess to send her disapproval in such a form . . .

It does not take a priest to interpret this omen. There is change coming to these islands. It will touch us all, from chieftain to beggar. It will sweep the archipelago from a foreign source. Our children will suffer its consequences.

What does Ngati say by visiting this doom upon my tribe? And how can I tell the rest of our people that the first signs came in the body of my firstborn?

—Chieftain log, burned fragment

or destroying Ukaizo—stripping it from the people as if it was wrested away.

Outsiders are quick to dismiss Ukaizo as an elaborate metaphor, arguing that it justifies the Huana desire to cling to the past. As far as the Huana are concerned, there is little disagreement about Ukaizo's tangible reality. This vehement defense of their origin in the face of extreme pressure has grabbed the attention of enterprising trading companies and explorers, ever on the hunt for unclaimed land and the riches of the Deadfire. Many people of power suspect, though do not openly discuss, that whoever controlled Ukaizo would control the Huana in turn, and therefore the Deadfire itself.

♦ **NGATI'S CHOSEN** Some kith are born possessing the physical aspect of the gods. Horns, feathers, and scales are common, with more advanced and aggressive growths appearing less frequently. Outside of the Deadfire there is little consensus regarding why some souls going through the cycle of reincarnation emerge on the other side with such unlikely traits. Society has always regarded godlike kith differently—sometimes with fear, other times with reverence, and always with awe. In spite of their differences, all of the Huana tribes are of a similar mind with regard to how a godlike birth should be treated, and the myth of Ngati's Chosen is inextricably tied to the Huana's treatment of these unique figures.

Following normal procedure, priests measure the godlike infant's soul to determine what place they are meant to occupy in the caste structure. By virtue of being touched by the gods, the likelihood of the infant being ranked in the Roparu caste is slim to none. Godlike infants are also closely scrutinized and interpreted as priests seek to understand the intentions of the gods who dispatched their "chosen" as de facto messengers.

Popular Huana belief holds that the godlike are mediums between the mortal realm and the Beyond, and that they carry messages intended for the tribe. These omens and portents surrounding the godlike are accounted for at birth. If a priest judges the omens to be favorable, the godlike is considered an endorsement from the relevant deity, and the tribe celebrates the adherence to tradition and piety which earned their esteem. If the omen portends a god's wrath or displeasure, the priest will look to the cause within the tribe and interpret what behavior needs to be amended to appease the gods. Such births have altered things as insignificant as fishing habits and as grand as chieftain leadership.

The godlike are also expected to fulfill the mission of their patron or patroness in some way, which can lead to a stifling lack of choice in their vocation. A godlike meant to bring life

THIS independent streak, it troubles, but what else should we expect of Ngati's Chosen? Tekēhu ignores his duties to the guild, shirks his training, and cavorts with poets and bathhouse revelers. His arrogance is arguably deserved, but I cannot be seen to endorse such behavior. Ekerā, it sends the wrong message to the other students.

What is Ngati telling us? Is it that we are drunk on good fortune while our moral center decays? Are we being rewarded for cooperation with the outsiders, or punished for it? Is our young savant the future of the Huana, or a handsome distraction?

I must be harder on him. He is good to no one if he lacks the friction of discipline. And if my efforts drive him away, it will say more about the Watershapers Guild and the state of Neketaka than it will about our Tekēhu.

Gods help us, why did Ngati send him in the midst of all this? As if we needed the goddess to tell us that change approaches. Change is already here. Unless she means to warn of more still to come? The islands are being claimed from under us, and the Deadfire is in jeopardy. What relentless doom has not yet crested the horizon?

—Journal of Guildmaster Mairu,
Watershaper Archives

to the tribe's crops, for example, will be strongly discouraged from any activity but planting. Whether accompanied by good or bad fortune, the influence of the godlike is a matter of local concern, impacting matters within the tribe.

In rare instances, the godlike are considered influential on a far greater scale, with the potential to impact not only the tribe, but all Huana. The godlike's destiny is tied to the advancement of the Deadfire people, and what this rare individual accomplishes in life could set the tone for generations to come. This belief is what first paved the way for the notion of Ngati's Chosen—not an idea that any priests endorsed at first, but one that built in such popular acclaim that the Mataru eventually recognized its veracity.

As an island people, the Huana place special emphasis on Ngati, goddess of the sea and their interpretation of Ondra in the common pantheon of the gods. Ngati is an often-unreliable

trickster in Huana tradition, but has been known to show matronly favor to the tribes. She appears as a powerful woman with the head of an anglerfish, sometimes portrayed in a grand hall of coral and bone, where the dining tables are carved from the decks of sunken ships.

When a godlike child is born possessing the traits of Ngati (scaly skin, fish-like markings, bioluminescent lamps, or other marine qualities), the child's development and future exploits will be closely examined, interpreted, and strictly controlled. Their life's path is more challenging to define by traditional methods. There is no telling what a marine godlike is born to portend or accomplish, only that they have been created as harbingers of change and upheaval, the revision of established norms, and often appear as tricksters themselves. It is said that this is owing to Ngati's unpredictable influence. She wants the tribes to know that she is invested and attentive, but to keep them guessing as to her motives.

By the tenets of this rigid tradition, the marine godlike's life is not their own. Whatever omen or message they have come to deliver, their life's work will be devoted to clarifying and furthering that cause. In many ways, they are treated as living as closely to the gods as Mataru priests. The chief difference is that their mortal life, not their divine connection, will be the subject of unending scrutiny.

This tradition of reverence and attentiveness to the omens of the godlike has one mark of inconsistency—those born with the godlike attributes of Skaen. These children seldom come into the world healthy. Their difficult births often lead to the death of the mother, and the babies themselves resemble cruel parodies of nature, being horribly scarred, eyeless, their lips pulled back in mocking grins, and possessing fully developed teeth sharpened to points. Huana midwives are instructed and trained not to let these newborns survive beyond the moment of their birth. Whatever terrible omen the gods deliver in this unwelcome form, it is better left undelivered, that the tribe may amend their ways without inviting further misfortune.

*Pitied is Ngati, Lady of Lament.
As the pearl orb of the heavens crosses her view,
Her eyes well with tears as constant as rain.
But the moon's skyward journey continues apace,
The lovers' affection as ephemeral as fingers
touching.*

*—Excerpt from Periki's Devotion,
Watershaper Guildhall Archives*

♦ **UMUSA, THE SHIELD OF MAGRAN** An old tale of Ngati's Chosen focuses on the birth of a young girl named Umusa of the Hupu tribe. Umusa came into the world with webbed fingers, eyes placed on the sides of her head, and a narrow fin running down the length of her spine. The priests had great difficulty interpreting the omens surrounding Umusa's birth, and resolved to keep an eye on her development. If a subtle hint from Ngati failed to register, a more insistent one would become evident in time.

From an early age, Umusa hated the outdoors. Her sensitive skin burned easily under the sun's rays, and she kept to the flooded jungles inland whenever possible. In the isolation of nature, Umusa crafted dolls for herself—beautiful figures of wood and straw—which the priests judged to mean that she would grow into an authority and caregiver. For all their eagerness to interpret the will of Ngati, the priests fixated on Umusa's loneliness, a byproduct of the true omen which went tragically overlooked.

Only one priest, Tamatu, reasoned that it was not the outdoors Umusa so detested, but the mountain range of Magran's Teeth which filled the northeastern horizon. Umusa had established her bog sanctuary on the opposite side of the island, unconsciously widening the distance between herself and those intimidating peaks. Tamatu argued to his colleagues that Ngati had sent them a warning, and pleaded for them to dispatch word to the other tribes that danger would soon emerge from the volcano chain. His interpretation of the omens was rejected.

Crestfallen, Tamatu nevertheless sent a missive by bird to the three closest islands, passing on his advice that the tribes should relocate their people inland and to the southwest. He also confided in his closest allies and managed to convince a dozen Hupu families to move away from the beaches.

A fortnight later, Tamatu and his small community were beginning to doubt their resolve when the ground shook and a smoke plume exploded up from Magran's Teeth. The force of the blast coalesced into a pyroclastic flow of superheated ash, which raced toward the islands in a miasma that blocked out the sun. Those who dropped their tasks and fled inland had little time to make the journey, and most would find themselves overtaken by the relentlessly expanding cloud. Only the few who had settled in the deeper jungle and protection of the canopy were assured their survival.

When the ash finally settled, Umusa was the first of her people to emerge from the jungle and initiate the long process of rebuilding. She carved a canoe from the dense wood of her bog and took up the oar and the harpoon, eager to find



a home well beyond the shadow of Magran's Teeth. Leaving her destiny behind, Umusa mounted her wooden dolls on the prow of her tiny vessel and set sail, embracing the horizon without fear.

♦ **AMIRA'S EGG** Many of the foreigners who settled the Deadfire arrived as missionaries. These hopeful believers, wishing to bring the word of the true gods to the Huana, found themselves at odds with the local understanding of the divine. No story affronted these newcomers more than that of Amira's egg, the Huana creation myth.

Amira is widely considered the Huana analog of Hylea, goddess of birds and creativity. In Deadfire lore, she takes the form of a gargantuan bird whose every feather spans the length of an island, and whose beak dwarfs the highest mountain. When she flies, she beats her wings not against air, but the dream space outside of mortal perception.

Long before the world had substance or form, Amira and the other great beasts of the void existed much as animals do. A bird of multicolored plumage visited Amira's grove and alighted on her tree. He came from a place beyond even this outer realm, and had lost his way. Amira gave him comfort, and eventually offered him a place in her nest. He departed unexpectedly, leaving only a feather behind, every fiber of it possessing all the colors of creation.

Soon enough (as the great beasts understood time), Amira laid an egg, its shell a patchwork of colors from her and her mate's plumage. No sooner had the egg landed on the soft pillow of Amira's nest than it cracked. What emerged was no bird, but light and physical space, which expanded rapidly in all directions, causing Amira and the other great beasts to flee to make way for the world that writhed in its birth pangs. By the time the process had slowed and cooled, the egg had hatched all of known reality—elements and time, life and death, and space that could only be crossed by land, sea, or air.

Amira and the other great beasts kept their distance from this budding existence, so constrained and different from their usual hunting and rutting grounds. Whenever the great aurochs or great badger pawed the ground near this reality and nipped at its edges, Amira would swoop down from on high to defend her strange offspring. As unintentional as this creation had been, and as much as it seemed to rear itself to maturity without a mother's aid, Amira felt a sense of ownership over creation, and would defend it with her life.

♦ **RIKUHU'S BOWELS** Many of the Huana beliefs in the gods stem from the animistic myths of their ancestors,

where deities took their aspects from the plants or animals of the Deadfire. As increasing numbers of foreigners came to the archipelago, the Huana quickly found themselves wondering how to treat not only the strangers but the foreign shrines and rituals they carried in their wake. It didn't take much observation to appreciate that the traditional Huana deities had analogs in outside cultures—a realization which came as a surprise and mark of pride for the Mataru priests, who saw this as an endorsement of their faith and a favorable sign of good dealings to come.

In the case of Berath, the widely accepted god of cycles, doorways, and the wheel of rebirth, the Huana found a similar figure in their own Rikuhu—the twin eels between which life and death are simultaneously entwined. The symbol of Rikuhu depicts two such creatures in a circular configuration, each devouring the other by the tail. The topmost eel is Kohopa, representing life and the known world. The lowermost is Tangalao, representing death and the world beyond mortal understanding.

Huana myth posits that the twin eels were the first beings to grow aware of hunger, and with it the passage of time. In their ravenous craving, they began to ingest every living thing they encountered, making short work of the newborn existence hatched from Amira's egg. The goddess protested, but the eels were too consumed by hunger to heed wisdom, and none of the great beasts spoke up on Amira's behalf.

Though they had stripped the world of all life and matter, Tangalao and Kohopa found themselves still starving. Each eel came to the conclusion to eat his fatted sibling. Kohopa bit the tail of Tangalao and worked his jaws up the length of his brother's body, and all the while Tangalao returned the favor. This decision trapped them in an unending cycle of cannibalistic fratricide known as Rikuhu. Since the eels had already devoured all tangible existence, it was understood that the cycle of birth, life, and death is how mortals, in their limited perception, experience the process of digestion in Rikuhu's bowels.

To this day, priests of Rikuhu commemorate their privileged role in the cycle by delivering sermons from within the skeletal jaws of giant eels. This signifies their responsibility to pass on the wisdom of the dead to the realm of the living, as they take it upon themselves to prepare the community in mind and soul for their next voyage through the digestive process.

The Huana do not generally fear death and its communion with the eternal cycle (no more than any other kith), but some disagree on the structure on which this cycle is built. Among the

WE have already lost more of our ancestral art than we may ever hope to recover, and those who came before us weep for our forgetfulness. As much as I have sacrificed to see that our students are as strong and as prepared as they can be, there is a limit to what I can teach. I am not alone in suspecting that the wisdom of Ngati's covenant would unlock in the Huana such powers as could shape the Deadfire herself into paradise. Until the day when we remember ourselves again, the Four Forms, with all their limitations, will have to suffice.

The forms are not a road map which every student must follow in their sequence, and even masters are not expected to perfect them all. They are presented in their logical order to chart the mental journey that every student must undertake. No judgment is reserved for those who start at the "beginning," and no praise heaped on those who skip to the "end." The forms are movement, thought, and ritual in harmony, and no two of us can act on them in the same manner.

Do not mistake the forms for the wisdom of our ancestors. The forms are mere shadows cast by something larger and greater than we may ever know. At best, they are a dim interpretation of what watershaping was meant to be. Not even memories of shadows, but stories we tell of the memories of shadows.

1. THE FORM OF GRIEF

This most basic of forms teaches that the physical body has limitations, and there is only so much a student can learn. A hard lesson for the ambitious, but a necessary one. Try as we might to understand water, we can never be as mutable as this divine element.

2. THE FORM OF HOPE

This form is a riddle to be considered, and one which relies on deep study and personal conclusions. Though our bodies are suffused with water, we are a solid form. We are the water and the amphora, the bearers and the essence of Ngati's element.

Students of this form benefit from practicing in places where the water meets the land—shores, falls, sea caves. Here, one can easily perceive how the mountain bows before the stream, and how the island cowers in the sea.

3. THE FORM OF METAMORPHOSIS

Students should be aware of their internal water, its presence, and its power. Blood ebbs and flows by the tide of our internal moon. The brain floats in an enclosed tide pool. The gut is a cistern, its walls permeable, turning all that it touches into water.

Though our physical limitations cannot be overcome, here we see that the struggle is already won. We are water, and water is us. Anything that is water can be bent to our will.

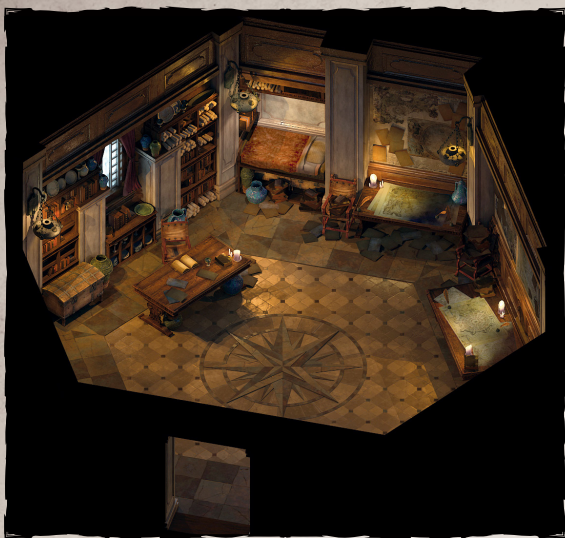
4. THE FORM OF TRANSCENDENCE

I can teach nothing of this form. When students come upon references to a fourth form in our library, I allow them to approach me with questions. It is the province of the young to find interest in futility.

With total understanding of water comes the erosion of all barriers. There is no division between land and shore, no difference between flesh and blood. A master of the fourth form could move lakes, steer rivers, and coax the rain from a cloudless day. Gather enough of these masters together and they could resculpt the very face of the Deadfire—raise sunken isles, shift the pull of the ocean, or link atolls to bridge the islands into a unified landmass. Truly this was watershaping in its original expression, a source of unity and power for the Huana.

The gifts from a trickster, once given, are easily taken away. The greatest strength of watershaping is also its most crushing disappointment, and there is nothing I can do to bind that wound. Nothing but teach, and dream, and wonder who will take up the remains of our fracturing covenant.

—Three Forms and a Sorrow, by Guildmaster Periki



more fervent and enthused of religious worshipers, a whispered belief holds that time exists within Rikuhu alone, and outside of the eels stretches the void and eternal dream from which all things once sprang. They imagine an existence without duration or knowing, where Amira and the rest of the great beasts still roam. In this unimaginable vista, the souls of all beings come together with their ancestors and descendants simultaneously. If Kohopa and Tangaloa were satiated (or even killed), then their bodies would separate and kith could rejoin the paradise and dream that was stripped from them so long ago.

Watershaping and Ngati's Covenant

Watershaping is the oldest known tradition of the Huana and is widely considered the touchstone of their achievements. Using a combination of stances and mindsets, collectively referred to as "forms," specially trained Huana are able to mold water like clay, easing it into semipermanent shapes with hand and thought. The breadth of possible applications for watershaping in the Deadfire is virtually endless, from the steering of tides to the taming of hurricanes and sinking of enemy fleets.

Those who graduate from Neketaka's famous Watershapers Guild assume the title of Storm Speakers and are loaned out to islands or Huana ships as needed. Their most common assignments involve shielding vulnerable settlements from flooding or unexpected storms. In times of peace, this would be the extent of a Storm Caller's occupation. In times of great conflict, the Kahanga royal family use watershapers as expressions of might and displeasure. Presenting Storm Callers on the

flagship of a Huana fleet is a gesture which has never failed to halt naval aggression.

Even though watershaping is a practice that can be learned and developed over time, only the Huana have ever shown any adeptness for it. This is a mark of fierce cultural pride as far as the Huana are concerned. Knowledge of the forms is publicly available through the guild library, but studious outsiders have been unable to yield the same result as Huana acolytes. Why this is the case has never been fully understood, much to the irritation of the trading companies, who would grasp the power of watershaping with both hands were it possible.

The Huana tell a very old myth about how their distant ancestors came upon the art, but it has been retold, translated, and interpreted to the point of being apocryphal. It tells that Ngati called her three most faithful and devoted worshipers to her watery realm. She dined with them in halls carved of coral and bone, and explained how she intended to express her gratitude for their years of long service.

To Dūmu the Eldest, she gave the protection of the islands. He and his descendants would safeguard the archipelago, its land and its seas, from outsiders whose hearts were cold. To Tapua the Wise, Ngati gave the protection of the tribes, making him vow to uphold and defend the traditions of her chosen people. To the youngest, Tokima the Recaller, she gave the protection of the adra. The health of the Deadfire, she explained, was its adra. For so long as adra remained, the homeland of the Huana would thrive, and their prosperity would grow through the generations.

Sealing this compact, Ngati gifted her three devoted followers with dominion over her realm of water. The ability to shape the very matter of the Deadfire would be theirs to possess and pass on to their families and tribesmen. With this great tool at their disposal, the Huana would reign as the kings and queens of the archipelago, uncontested and bearing the goodwill of the goddess for as long as they upheld their end of the bargain. If ever the Huana gave up their charges, then the gift of watershaping would depart from the isles forever.

In recent times, few Huana find themselves capable of overcoming the mental strain that

accompanies the forms of watershaping. The last practitioners of Ngati's talent cleave together in the Watershapers Guild, the jewel of Neketaka and locus of Huana prosperity, where they study the old ways and ponder how they can reinvigorate their declining tradition.

THE VAILIAN TRADING COMPANY

♦ **LANGUAGES:** Vailian, Aedyran

♦ **POPULATION:** Thirty thousand employees, including merchants, sailors, mercenaries, and explorers. A third of this total number has been allocated to the Deadfire campaign, which spreads out to cover territory and seek as many rich deposits of luminous adra as possible.

♦ **GOVERNMENT:** The Sengretta mea Compresa (Congress of the Company) forms a body of eleven high-stakes investors and noble advisers. Each has equal voting power to advance or stem any decision or strategy, in

which a simple majority vote is the deciding factor. Their representatives in the Deadfire are director Ignato Castol, a merchant with a history of turning business ventures around, and Lueva Alvai, the results-oriented governor of the Deadfire.

♦ **PROMINENT DEITIES:** Woedica, Hylea, Galawain

The Vailian Trading Company formerly existed as a worldwide mercantile organization, its single-minded goal to monopolize trade and control the flow of currency so that all coin washed up on Republic shores. Spurred by the discovery of luminous adra and its breadth of possible applications, the trading company shifted its mission to wringing a profit out of the Deadfire by any means necessary, and allocated much of their resources toward this goal.

The broad allowances granted by the ducs bels of the Vailian Republics authorize the Sengretta to act much like an arm of the Republics themselves, far beyond the normal expectations of



... And in keeping with the good faith of the aforementioned Agreement, the Tribe will henceforth bequeath the associated Lands, spanning some four hundred acres, to the keeping of the Vailian Trading Company. This exchange legally qualifies as a donation and not a purchase agreement. Ameliorations owing for hesitation, doubt, regret, or cultural sensitivity will be made in the form of ten thousand copper pires paid in credit redeemable at participating trading posts with an exchange rate of no greater than three-fourths of original value.

This Agreement is final and cannot be contested, save in the event of a majority vote of the ducs bels to overturn the Investment, whereupon all funds will revert to the keeping of the Republics. In such an event, the Lands will remain the property of the Vailian Trading Company during the review process, and the amity of the Agreement is understood to be dissolved.

*—Excerpt of Standard Company Contract
HA-C1, for clerical reference*

a trading company. With its seemingly unlimited authority, the Vailian Trading Company can fortify outposts on foreign soil, declare war, and, if necessary, conquer territory. The trading company prefers to further its ends with business agreements, but it is implicitly understood that the ducs bels will justify and defend any action taken on behalf of the Republics in court, and they will surely win.

Since animancy unlocked the potential properties of luminous adra, the Sengretta sponsored a team of animancers to establish a research tower among the ancient temples of Neketaka. By experimenting with luminous adra close to the source, the trading company hopes to unlock applications that would open new adra markets and further their profits.

A current of cultural pride underpins all the trading company's efforts. Devoted employees subscribe to the philosophy that Vailians are the craftiest merchants, and that this temperament should be upheld and reinforced with decisive action. This attitude of superiority takes the form of healthy competition within the Republics, but

its manifestation abroad can prove less healthy or sustainable. In the context of a Deadfire colony, unrealistically high expectations are placed on Vailian leadership as intense pressure radiates from distant managers. Employees are intimidated and driven beyond their endurance to succeed in a hierarchy built around promotion or punishment. Anyone who performs beneath their expected capacity is swiftly recalled back to the Republics, demoted, and summarily replaced.

Even these treacherous waters describe the most amicable of circumstances. A colonial leader found to be underperforming (or merely suspected of it) is just as likely to find themselves lost at sea, maimed by some industrial accident, or reduced in status by an erupting scandal. Through such clever political maneuverings, the trading company ensures a culture of rivalry and vendetta, ensuring that the most deserving rise to the top at any cost. Employees who serve out their assignments in the Deadfire are understood to be the most effective, ruthless, and ultimately profitable members of the entire organization.

The Vailian Trading Company's mission in the Deadfire is threefold—to sweep every island in the archipelago for luminous adra, to secure land rights from local tribes or governments with a claim on the land, and to establish mining and refinement operations to expeditiously ship luminous adra back to the Republics in a powdered form. How they go about accomplishing their goals is, by design, not explicitly outlined. The Sengretta have every confidence that the company will perform to their expectations by whatever means necessary.

Though the potential earnings of the Deadfire campaign are beyond speculation, the company won't see any return on their investment until a costly and dependable infrastructure (both material and bureaucratic) is solidified on the frontier. Offices, land rights, trading posts, mining and refining operations, and shipping agreements make up the most basic needs of the company, whose success depends on these moving parts working simultaneously and without interference.

With such high and unforgiving stakes, Director Castol and Governor Alvari are under tight pressure to deliver on the investment as quickly as possible. Some within the company hierarchy worry that the

expenditure of funds and labor has already exceeded potential earnings, but this opinion typically goes unvoiced and is politically unpopular. Republic economists have been known to misrepresent their figures in a way that reflects favorably on the company, and there is every reason to expect that this type of manipulation occurs regularly. Even if the campaign had run out of funds, it would take months or years before any hard facts came to light, buying company leadership time to pivot and develop new strategies of bringing in coin from the Deadfire.

Land Dealings

Because so much of the Deadfire's accessible luminous adra is situated on land, legal ownership of island territory is critical to the success of the Vailian Trading Company's efforts. To support this complication, dedicated Republic clerks have adopted a process for transferring land rights to the Republics on profitable terms.

Hardened teams of scouts and explorers set out to locate previously undiscovered deposits of luminous adra. Once a worthy prospect is identified, the Republic's merchant fleet assumes control of the operation and determines which of the local Huana tribes holds claim on the land.

The Huana view landownership with a fluidity that does not strictly conform to Vailian jurisprudence, which can cause negotiations to get uncomfortably tense. In the absence of a clear landowner, the closest (or most cooperative) tribe is assigned such a status in the terms of an evolving contract. Once that formality is defined to Vailian specifications, a deal is struck with the tribe's chieftain.

It is worth noting that the trading company regards any tribe refusing the terms of a deal to be obstructionists. Under the powers granted by the ducs bels, there is no end to the penalties which can be leveled upon a tribe once this status has been earned. Standing in the path of trading company business is tantamount to declaring war on the Republics themselves, and many deals have been struck solely on the basis that they are more favorable than the inevitably violent alternatives.

In exchange for payment in Republic coin, the Vailian Trading Company is named inheritor of

the tribe's land. All the while, merchants set up operations on their future territory and deal with the Huana, offsetting whatever the company spent on the land in the first place with a new source of profits. This gives the Huana tribe time to congratulate themselves on having diplomatically brought matters to a peaceful conclusion, which makes for a carefully crafted but false sense of security.

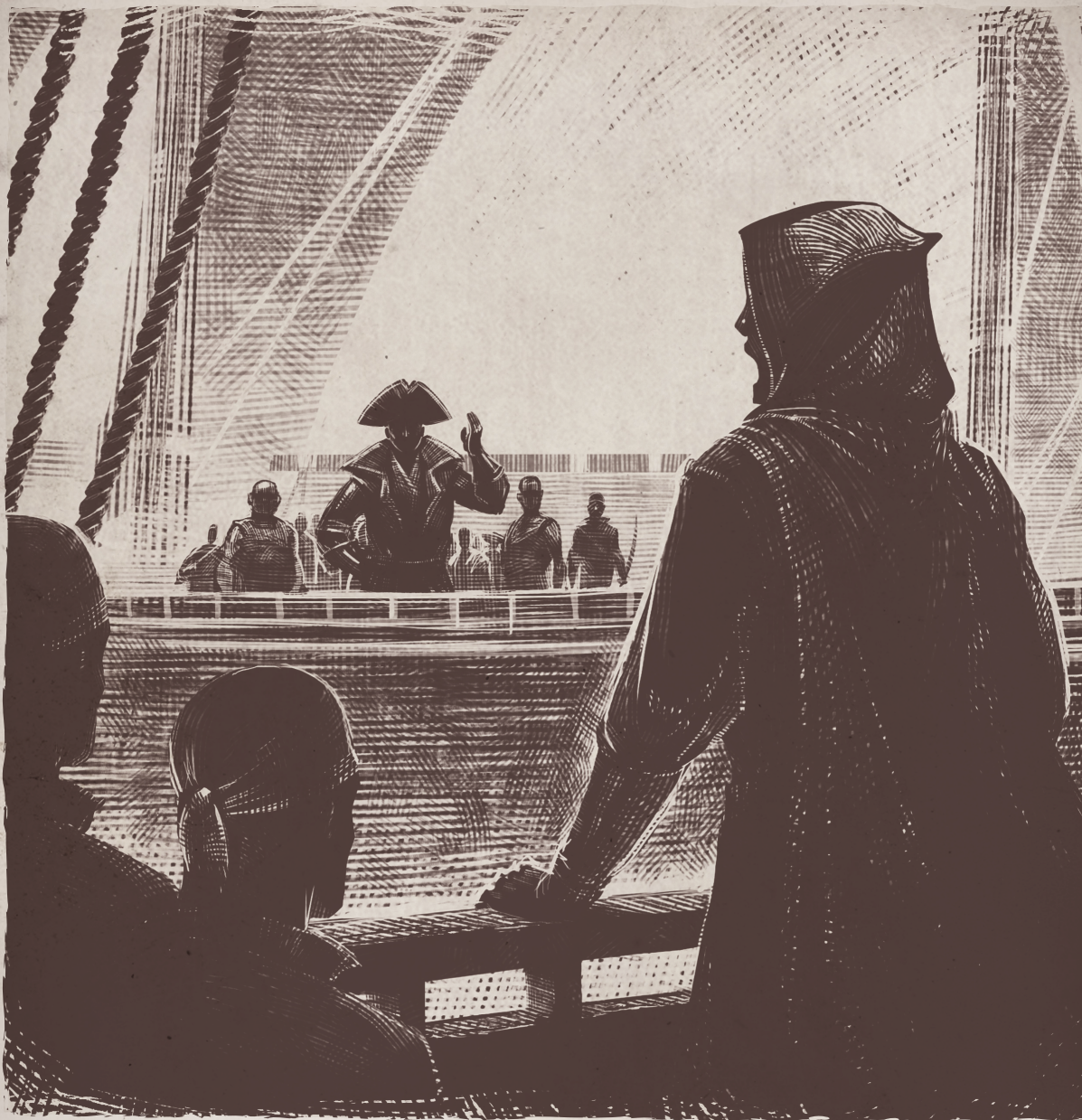
When the chieftain who signed the agreement perishes, landownership reverts to the Republics. This is often where the tribe recognizes the ramifications of their deal and the depths of Vailian legal strategy. The tribe is either forced off their lands or retained as free labor, put to work as miners in exchange for an extension on their residence.

If the tribe is forced off the Vailian territory, their recourses are limited. The tribes will typically make for another distant island on their migration route. If this interruption of the resettlement cycle results in food or supply shortages, the tribe's last, desperate option is to flee to Neketaka as refugees. They begin new lives under the protection of the Kahanga crown, though their cultural identity may be compromised or lost in the rabble of the city.

The Huana crown does not view this arrangement favorably, but maintaining peaceful diplomatic relations between the Kahanga and the trading companies means that sacrifices must be made. In recent history, Queen Onekaza II has tolerated the mass relocation of her people onto Neketaka. She has struggled to balance survival with the challenging demands and impatience of the trading companies, who see her as a means to their end.

• VIRTUES: Competition, jurisprudence

The Vailian Trading Company does not overtly encourage its employees to root out the failings or shortcomings of their immediate superiors, but generously rewards any such discovery that results in banishment or demotion. Armies of clerks and legal experts, obsessed with defensible paperwork, study each other's contracts in search of flaws or language which could negatively impact their mission. Adding to the environment of competition, this has bred a culture of sabotage and favoritism worth more to the employees than the coin it ultimately generates.



♦ VICES: Resentment, boorishness

In the culture that the Vailian Trading Company fosters, it is natural and expected that competing kith will ruffle feathers and otherwise cause upset in their tireless efforts to further their own ambition. A party that has been wronged by sabotage, espionage, or any other manipulative practice is considered to have stumbled, if not fallen out of the company's favor. There are a few business-minded ways of buying one's way back into the confidence of the Controllers General, but none is more successful than a demonstration of ruthlessness and savvy.

Retaliation against a competitor is an expected and quietly encouraged practice. Striking back with full transparency, however, is not. Whatever misdeed led to bruised feelings or a loss of resources is understood to be resolved and therefore irrelevant. Vengeance should not appear as vengeance, but rather take on a new guise—most preferably one which involves a shrewd venture or economic takeover. If it flips the power dynamic in an intriguing way and involves a bare minimum of blood spilled, then it is considered both good business and a worthy practice that the Vailian Trading Company would gladly endorse.

THE ROYAL DEADFIRE COMPANY

♦ **LANGUAGES:** Rauataian, Aedyran

♦ **POPULATION:** Ten thousand employees mostly conscripted from Rauatai's navy to further the task of Deadfire occupation and settlement. Others include explorers, traders, and mercenaries who scramble to make pace with the Vailian Republic's head start. The vast majority consists of coastal aumaua, with other races (humans, dwarves, orlans) of less significant quantity or status.

♦ **GOVERNMENT:** A council of five naval captains formed what began as the Rauatai Deadfire Company, a mercantile and military force gathered in response to the Vailian Republic's aggressive incursion into contested regions. When it became clear that equally aggressive countermeasures were required to sustain a sufficiently powerful force in the Deadfire, Rauatai's ranga nui took charge of the trading company, devoting his navy to its cause and renaming it the Royal Deadfire Company. He promoted the five captains to the rank of hazanui (a term of admiralty, both singular and plural in usage). The hazanui council rules over the dealings and strategy of the Royal Deadfire Company, owing their allegiance and oversight directly to the ranga nui.

The hierarchy of the company operates much like a military. Beneath the hazanui are fleet masters and ship captains, thus keeping the chain of command in naval hands and dispensing with the unnecessary complication of colonial governors. Any laws enacted are patterned off maritime equivalents, and are strictly enforced.

♦ **PROMINENT DEITIES:** Magran, Abydon, Galawain

Centuries have passed since Rauatai conquered the western-facing gulf of their northern continent. In the ensuing period spent establishing order and solidifying themselves as an imperial power, Rauatai experienced great difficulty in harvesting the food needed to sustain their population. Violent storms assaulted the coastal region, and the lands struggled to produce crops on a scale that would

support their kingdom, much less their imperial ambitions. Their existing resources went toward trade arrangements with foreign countries to supply Rauatai with food, making up the difference in what they could not grow.

The country's investment in arms and trade, placing diplomacy at a distant third, is evident by the state of their navy. The Rauataian armada is second to none, bristling with cannons unlike any armament found in Eora. What the soil of Rauatai lacks in fertility it makes up for in rich deposits of iron, sulfur, and saltpeter. With the very resources of war in such

abundance, warfare as an expansion tactic has come to define Rauatai's political character.

Naval power has grown Rauatai's sailors into notoriously hardened and experienced seamen. Battles not won by superior arms and tactics are won by sheer intimidation, to the point where most pirates retreat at the first sign of the naval insignia. This air of strength and superiority has carried into the colonial objectives of the Royal Deadfire Company as well. As a decorated military organization with the approval of the ranga nui, the company responds to Vailia's aggression with a righteous desire to spread their emergent empire into lands of enormous bounty and potential.

After the Aedyran Empire made its rich colonial investment in the Dyrwood, Rauatai also experienced a surge of nationalistic thinking. The War of Defiance, in which the Dyrwood cut themselves from their imperial roots, did not stall Rauatai's desire for a similar economic windfall of a prosperous colony. The court of the ranga nui took heart that any settlement made away from the empire's shadow would be fiercely regimented and controlled as a military operation loyal only to the homeland. Aedyr's failure to hold their colony only emboldened Rauataians in their desire to prove themselves the superior power by succeeding where others had failed.

In addition to their interests as settlers and nation builders, the coastal aumaua of Rauatai have a cultural stake in the Deadfire. History tells that their ancestors emigrated from the Huana tribes of the archipelago millennia ago, where they eventually settled what would become Rauatai. Even though the facts are indistinct, this mass exodus underpins a Rauataian sense of ownership over the Deadfire. Their ancestral Deadfire islands, now under attack by foreign adversaries, must be reclaimed in the name of the empire. This sensibility is shared





by most Rauataians at home and abroad, from the lowliest deckhand to the ranga nui himself.

Whatever compelled Rauatai's ancestors to leave the motherland, be it the cataclysms of old or a tribal disagreement, a majority of Rauataians support the notion of a triumphant return. By imposing the order and structure of civilization upon the Deadfire—which (in the ranga nui's estimate) the Huana have failed to accomplish—Rauatai would prove itself the superior power in the region. Over time, as the colonial investment in the Deadfire paid dividends in food and other resources, the ranga nui hopes that other nations would turn to Rauatai seeking loans without giving the wealthy banks of the Vailian Republics a thought. Given the richness and opportunity of the Deadfire, the investment seems a safe one.

Weather Engineering

The reality of their nation's harsh climate, with its brutal and unforgiving seasons, forced Rauatai to

seek a deeper understanding of weather conditions. Prediction alone would save tens of thousands from starvation and let the government make adequate preparations. In the palace of the ranga nui, courtiers and travelers from afar present new solutions and foreign advances in the field of weather augury. Many of these "solutions" amount to overcomplicated animancy devices which require soothsayers to interpret (with questionable accuracy).

Widespread interest in the Deadfire has highlighted a feature of the archipelago that has gone unexplained—namely, the storm phenomena around Ondra's Mortar. Theories abound, but no one has argued for a definitive reason for the storms to continue uninterrupted, as they have since before historic reckoning.

Some have speculated that the luminous adra found in the Deadfire is somehow to blame, and

the furious storms are a byproduct of the incredible soul energy present in the region. This theory gained some traction for associating two of the most unique and mysterious features of the archipelago, the storms and the adra, as existing in some ecological harmony not fully understood. Unlike the Vailian Republics, Rauatai has no design on mining or exploiting the adra. They instead want the adra to remain as it has for millennia, and to better understand the force which it exerts on its native waters.

The ranga nui argues that Rauatai is the only nation possessing the responsibility to control such an incredible power, and is therefore the rightful steward of the Deadfire. Though the Huana consider themselves the ancestral guardians of luminous adra, recent history has challenged their ability to keep the precious resource out of Vailian hands—a dereliction of duty that Rauataians find reprehensible. This swell of nationalism and sense of purpose ignited in the Rauataian navy a passion and enthusiasm to take over the Deadfire before it could be spoiled to the detriment of their homeland.

By controlling the luminous adra, Rauatai hopes to accomplish history's greatest feat of agricultural engineering—steering the weather to bring moisture to arid places and life to lifeless lands. The Deadfire already makes for a fruitful and abundant ecosystem, boasting the potential to feed both Rauatai and the Huana with ease. By arming themselves with the power to manipulate storms, Rauatai hopes to increase the growth potential of every Deadfire island a thousandfold and fashion themselves into an unstoppable world power.

Setting aside Rauatai's ambitions, the span of ocean which encompasses Ondra's Mortar makes for an intimidating prospect. Even if the storms all ceased at once, crossing that distance without a clear bearing would represent weeks or months of hard travel through uncharted seas. Rauatai would need to bring the full power of its fleet to bear, including ships stocked with naught but provisions and supplies, merely to attempt the journey. Chancing that many vessels and capable sailors on a blind voyage is unheard of in naval circles, making Ondra's Mortar as deadly as it is tantalizing.

Ship Escorting

Unlike its Vailian counterparts, the Royal Deadfire Company does not invest in the immediate profits of the Deadfire by exploiting the available resources. Theirs is a long-term interest with more dedicated and nationalistic objectives. Unfortunately, this also means that any crisis of resources or capital is a tangible threat to the entire operation. If the company could not feed its sailors or finance its dealings abroad, then all of the cannons in Rauatai could not save the Deadfire campaign. The homeland dispatches regular shipments of supplies, provisions, and capital to the Deadfire troops, but this only fosters a dependency which the hazanui detest. Considering the pirate- and monster-infested waters of the Deadfire, and the likelihood of ships making the journey from Rauatai without incident, even the ranga nui's dedicated support can seem ephemeral and unreliable to a campaign which relies on outside support.

To make up the difference and encourage security, the Royal Deadfire Company loans out their surplus ships and crews in escorting valuable cargo or passengers. Wealthy merchants or travelers with the



cause and the means to ship their valuables abroad will often turn to the hazanui to strike mutually favorable deals. The company has the resources and skill to counter pirates at sea, favoring small, maneuverable, and heavily armed ships. Rauataian sailors are especially proficient at outmaneuvering enemy ships to avoid broadside cannon fire, and it is common for company vessels to significantly outclass their opponents at sea. Many a bout with pirates has ended with the aggressor's ship crippled and flying a white flag before they could fire a single shot.

The Battle of Nakaro Atoll

In 2758 AI, as the Royal Deadfire Company made its first aggressive push into the archipelago, the Wahaki tribe retaliated by launching their canoes against the foreign armada. Warriors cut through the waters of the naval battle with ease—spearing their enemies from afar, using keen hooks to board ships, and employing chanters to splinter masts with the killing songs of their people.

The turning point in the battle came with the arrival of the Rauataian warship *Tenets of Iron*, an intimidating craft that lumbered through the waters. Rauatai had crafted waterborne explosives called Magran's Missives to combat sea monsters, and loaded the *Tenets of Iron* with dozens of them to protect the armada. They would instead serve their purpose in sending a clear message that Rauatai would not relent or compromise.

Each explosive blasted Wahaki canoes out of the water and killed hundreds of their decorated warriors. The Wahaki withdrew from the conflict and, in the interest of self-preservation, scaled back their aggression. Even though their fighting spirit was bruised, they persisted in lashing out with smaller raiding parties, which were troublesome, but hardly debilitating. The Royal Deadfire Company pressed its advantage, filling the archipelago with the horns of victorious warships.

In the aftermath of the bloody engagement, a cold silence filled the streets of Neketaka. The Kahanga

RED HANDS: Insubordination cannot be tolerated in any form. For those of free heart and loose tongue, I recommend heating a cannonball in the forge and placing it in the palms of their hands. The sailor, relying on their patriotism alone to save them, will recite every verse of the Rauataian national anthem. Any missed words will be amended by starting from the beginning. Once finished, the absolved can nurse their wounds and contemplate their deeds.

FLOGGING: The wonder of that time-honored and most musical of beatings is that it only goes skin deep, and causes no true harm at all. One must appreciate the message it sends when a sailor cannot sit down for weeks at a time, that their captain has denied them rest. Salting the lashes and squeezing lemon over them at muster is a deterrent without equal.

FLINTSEED RATIONING: The seed of the flint-fruit is kept on board as a purgative, and used sparingly at that. It can be boiled and fed to force out a body's poison or rot. Even in a diluted state, it goes down with such bitterness as to curdle the guts and spoil the

tongue. Feeding the depraved or the cowardly a diet of raw flintseed and water will remind them that law is life, and the captain holds mastery over every spoonful. The awful meal tears through the bowels of a sailor like a barracuda through wreckage, and the passage out will make the passage down a sweet memory by comparison.

SCOUR THE KEEL: When a sailor has disappointed the crew to such an extent that his life is forfeit to the mercy of the gods, they must scour the keel and bring a token from Ondra's realm. We start by arming the offender with a hammer and dragging them by ropes from one end of the keel to the other, battering the body until the lad or lass sees fit to bring us a barnacle chiseled from the ship's underside. Wiser men and women have used the hammer to end their lives before the deed began. A sorry sight, but a necessary one.

—On the Merits of Discipline,
by Captain Hamuto of the Restless

royalty heard of the devastation and knew, despite the Wahaki's detachment from the other tribes, that a reprisal was needed. They would not allow a precedent of unchecked conquest to take place in the Deadfire while they could stop it.

At first light, the master of the Watershapers Guild launched a ship which boasted a trio of Storm Callers at her prow, each holding a stance of deep concentration. No sooner had they sailed within sight of the Rauataian fleet than the waves changed course around the *Tenets of Iron*. As the watershapers conducted their ceremony, the ocean swept into a furious, unrelenting whirlpool. Despite the crew's best efforts to escape the hungry tide, the warship inevitably broke apart, dragging all souls down with it. Taking no further action, the Huana vessel departed for Neketaka, leaving the Rauataian fleet to manage a desperate, but doomed, rescue mission.

The Royal Deadfire Company dubbed the sinking of the *Tenets of Iron* as an unavoidable disaster, and kept the specifics of her demise out of official record. The hazanui went so far as to confiscate the logs of every captain who witnessed the ship's final hour. The shame and indignity of losing their most decorated and heavily armed vessel in absolute defeat was a blow to morale that the navy could not endure, and would only compromise the swell of enthusiasm from their victory over the Wahaki.

Hostilities toward the Huana slowed for a time, and foreign ships pressing into the Deadfire kept a cautious distance from each other ever after, lest any watershapers crest the horizon with vengeance in their hearts. Neither Rauatai nor the Huana officially recognized the sinking of the *Tenets of Iron* as an act of war. An air of grudging respect between the hazanui and the Kahanga throne suspended hostilities, though neither side forgot the losses which they incurred.

To Rauatai, the Battle of Nakaro Atoll became a rallying fable of military tactics followed quickly by a souring reminder. To the Huana, their retaliation turned a bloody defeat into an inspirational triumph over colonial oppression.

Naval Punishments

In keeping with the rigid discipline of its military, the Royal Deadfire Company adopted a colorful gallery of punishments for various naval infractions. The methods are horrible and creative by design in order to discourage acts which could be considered criminal, and it is therefore startling how often captains must execute them to the letter.

• VIRTUES: Discipline, toil, relentlessness

Because many of their values stem from a maritime lifestyle, Rauataians have a regimented culture. Orders are strictly enforced and adhered to. This practice carries into the rangānui's documents of law, which are not subject to any interpretation beyond their intended meaning. In this environment, backbreaking work is seen as a gift and a better alternative to something which is theoretically far worse, be it laziness or a more severe set of commands.

• VICES: Indolence, opportunism, wild ambition

Rauataian sailors pride themselves on their superior tactical mastery at sea, which is an earned and deserved reputation. They regard with disdain cheap tricks or beginner's luck, as the victory is soured by the chaos and confusion which wrought it. An ideal victory is one where a Rauataian vessel faces off against a heavily armed opponent and endures, contrary to all expectations, due to the mettle and teamwork of the crew. Ambushes are discouraged, and a victory over an inexperienced foe is considered a lesser form of conquest.

THE PRÍNCIPI SEN PATRENA

• LANGUAGES: Vailian, Aedryan

• POPULATION: Thirteen thousand on average, though such figures are notoriously inaccurate, being either padded for intimidation or understated for discretion. The Príncipi is largely composed of ocean folk of Vailian ancestry, with the rest being of diverse cultures and races—of which aumaua (a mixture of Rauataian and Huana) make up no small part. Approximately two-thirds of the population reside on their ships, and the rest live on island havens.



• **GOVERNMENT:** Any ship captain boasting a crew of fifty or more souls is eligible to join the Consuaglo mes Casitàs (Council of Captains), and their voting power is weighted by taking the number of crewmen into account. The Consuaglo makes for a lively and often dramatic accumulation of personalities, each vying for larger crews and greater influence over their peers. They address matters which impact the greater concerns of the Príncipi fleet, such as defining acceptable conduct, adjudicating disputes, evaluating mutinies, establishing new settlements, and managing diplomacy with other Deadfire powers. Much is left to the authority of individual ships to do as they please, making the Príncipi a refuge of the populist-minded.

• **PROMINENT DEITIES:** Príncipi faiths are as diverse as their crews, often reflecting their lands of origin. Sailors tend to favor Ondra as the goddess of the waves and Hylea as the goddess of the winds. Vailian descendants prefer Ondra, Hylea, and Woedica. Galley slaves who escaped into Príncipi culture have a quiet but notable affinity for Skaen. It is widely boasted that every god, like every kith, has a place somewhere in the Príncipi.

In the midst of Grand Vailia's drawn-out collapse, the empire's most prominent families resolved to go their own way. Ten vessels set sail together, bearing a thousand souls and the contents of their family estates. Mountains of coins, gems, works of art, and armories shared space in the hold with livestock and other basic necessities of survival.

The crews of these wayward vessels initially conducted themselves in a gregarious and celebratory manner, belting out the songs of their ancestors and casually moving between ships with an air of self-satisfied revelry. As the realities of their situation became more apparent, the strict discipline of Vailian society reasserted itself, forming a new basis for maritime law. The crew structure grew more orderly and less class oriented. Old social barriers fell by the wayside as nobles learned to work alongside their retainers, developed new skills, and married outside of societal norms.

Seeking a home to call their own, the wayward families looked to Eora's evolving frontiers. What they found was of little encouragement. The ducs of the Vailian Republics saw in these refugees a crop of untrustworthy competitors intent on seizing control

and espousing old-world values. As such, the exiles were strongly pressured to keep their distance from the Republics. Other frontiers had challenges of their own. Dyrwood was under assault by the wild denizens of Eir Glanfath, and Readceras suffered from both its poverty and its harsh climate. The people of the Ixamitl Plains were open and amenable to trading, but their lands were too unfamiliar and devoid of the building materials to which the Vailians were accustomed. The exiles turned their ships east, seeking to escape the long shadow of their past, and in time arrived at the Deadfire.

Their new home was not as welcoming as many had hoped. Distance between islands, violent and unpredictable weather, and treacherous currents made the foreign waters maddening to traverse. Crops failed to grow in the rocky, acidic soil, and pests dispatched their livestock with incredible speed and ferocity. Out of necessity, the Vailian exiles raided Huana coastal villages for what food and supplies they could not provide themselves. This would form the basis of a strained and antagonistic relationship with the Huana for many years to come.

Though their initial attempts at settlement and farming fell short, the exiles established a network of mercantile harbors where their ships could dock, trade, and repair damage taken during raids. In addition to providing the means for offloading pillaged goods, these modest waypoints grew into hubs of recruitment for any wayward soul, fugitive, or refugee seeking to begin their new life aboard a pirate ship. These safe havens were the closest approximation to a permanent town that the exiles had managed to carve out for themselves since the original exodus, and were their best-kept secrets.

By learning to rely on neighbors, countrymen, and strangers alike, these seafaring nomads formed a new sense of cultural identity as the Príncipi sen Patrena (Princes without a Homeland). Vailian nobility was merely the starting point. What flourished in its wake eventually developed into a multicultural and multiethnic group of passionate, aggressive individuals who fit none of the Deadfire's societal norms and made up their own as they went.

The Príncipi distinguished themselves as singularly meddlesome in the eyes of the trading



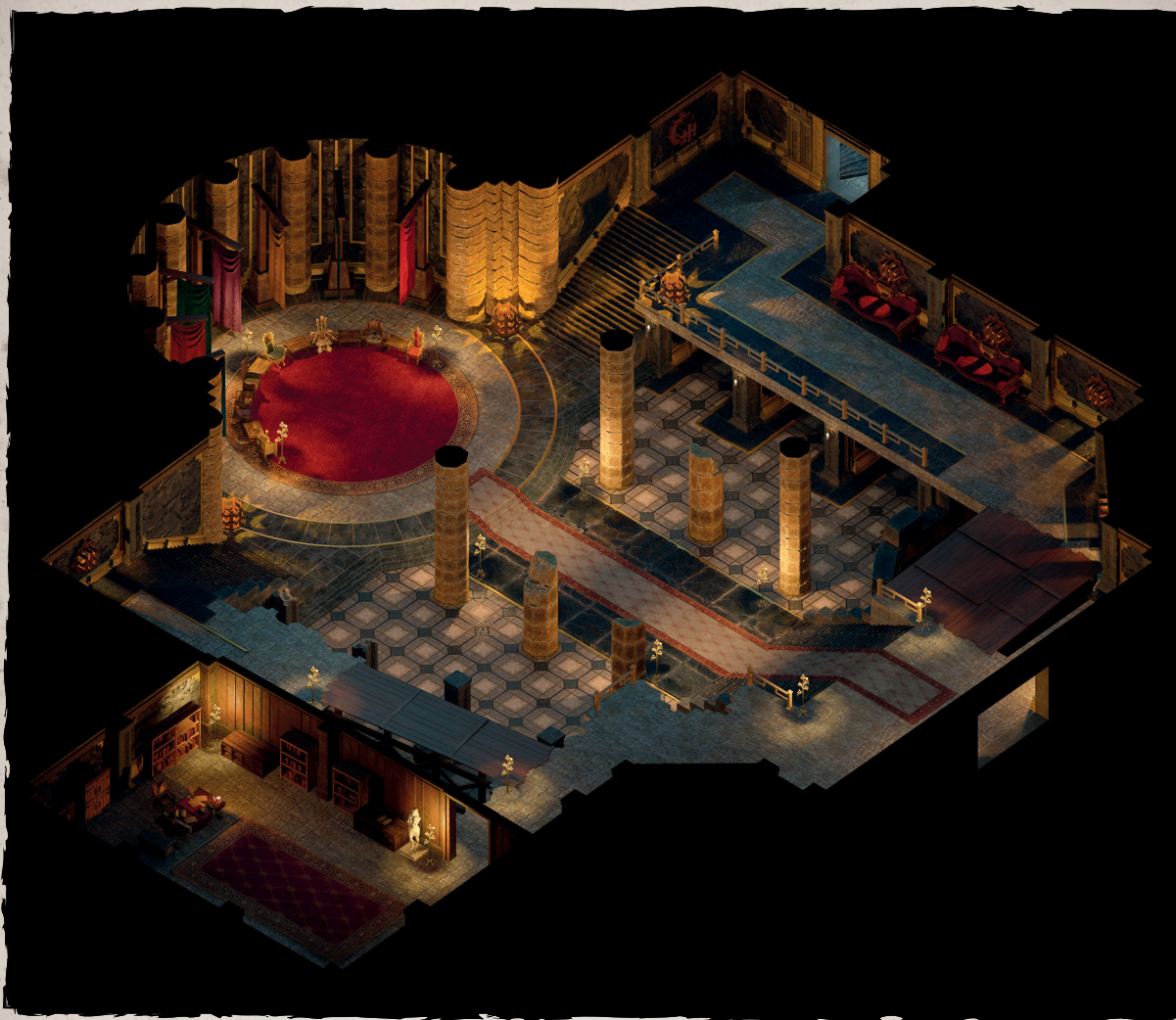
companies. Any interruption to colonization or adra mining was counted as a high crime deserving of the most severe punishment. Consequently, both factions hired experienced ship hunters to track down senior Príncipi captains across the archipelago. The work was lucrative, and the hunters were successful enough that the numbers of Príncipi high command went into steep decline, with new recruits forming an emergent majority.

Lacking the distinguished mindset of nobles, the new class of Príncipi clashed with the old in ideological debates over what should become of their liberated, yet unsustainable, way of life. Some believe that the Príncipi must continue to expand, taking new ships from the increased traffic of the Deadfire and using the power of numbers to their advantage. Others want the Príncipi to settle an island of their own and claim the legitimacy of nationhood that the original crews longed for when they left their motherland behind. This divergence of objectives makes for a bitter stalemate in the Príncipi ranks.

Shipboard Customs

Crew is family aboard a Príncipi vessel. Sailors dedicate their unwavering loyalty to their captain, who in turn is responsible for their care and well-being. It was the custom of Old Vailia for the members of noble houses to wear distinctive colors that identified them by region and station in society—a practice which has translated neatly into Príncipi society. Captains are known by flashy, often garish colors, and each member of his or her crew is expected to wear some article of clothing (traditionally a band around the head or arm) identifying their allegiance. Stripping a sailor of their colors is considered one of the highest punishments aboard a Príncipi ship, as it amounts to being ejected from one's family. These unfortunate individuals can find menial dockside labor, but their life at sea has come to an end, and many choose to leave the Príncipi altogether.

Sailors who join the Príncipi are issued a suolenet (Vailian, "little sun"), a coin-sized medallion etched with a pattern of the sailor's choosing. Suolenets are



often punched with a hole to be worn around the neck, in the hair, or around the arm or ankle. Ships of stature and wealth issue copper suolenets to every new recruit, while others expect their recent additions to fashion suolenets out of wood, bone, or other available materials. Showing one's suolenet identifies one's allegiance to the Príncipi cause.

The suolenet's most important function is to symbolize voting power before the *Consuaglo mes Casitàs*. When captains assemble into their high council, each arrives laden with the suolenets of their crew, demonstrating the weight of their leadership. Suolenets are cast to vote on any issue which lacks consensus, and demonstrate how the majority of the Príncipi see their interests fairly represented through their captains.

Dunnage

Long after dwarven explorers fled Balefire Beacon (2742 AI), a contingent of Príncipi sailors discovered the old stone tower in its unoccupied state. More importantly, they judged the surrounding island a ripe prospect for settlement. Bringing as many ships and unloading as much cargo as they could squeeze into its modest port, the pirates established the haven of Dunnage. Where the rocky island failed to support any infrastructure, they lashed old ships together and kept them moored to the rickety port, expanding the island as they saw fit.

The Príncipi always travel prepared for a fight, so the inevitable assault of the island's undead inhabitants found them ready and better equipped than

their dwarven predecessors. Though the undead had the element of surprise on their side, the pirates had a medley of weapons and black powder on theirs. The guls and fampyrs who “survived” their failed onslaught slunk into the shadows and departed. From there it was speculated that they stowed away in merchant ships and left Dunnage behind, sailing to parts unknown.

Balefire Beacon, once a promising lighthouse to draw in travelers, became a rallying point for the Príncipi fleet and the central hub of the Consuaglo’s seat of authority. Each of the ruling captains has a designated chair in the council chamber, where they adjudicate all manner of conflicts or proposals which could impact the greater fleet. Criminals worthy of execution are taken to the peak of the tower and unceremoniously thrown off, instilling a sense of justice and order amid the otherwise gaudy trappings of Dunnage and its brooding tower.

Among the haven’s heavily trafficked districts stands the Radiant Court, which boasts a market of goods both mundane and exotic. Three-quarters or more of the market’s wares are assumed to be the spoils of plunder, making for a rich diversity of items for sale. The volume of coin and valuables flowing through the Court attracts other fortune-hunting individuals—acrobats, illusionists, beast tamers, prognosticators, and the pickpockets who travel in their wake like pilotfish, eager to pick away at the rich and distracted.

Clussa’s Voyage

Some crimes are unforgivable, and even the degradation of exile will not suffice to punish the guilty. A Príncipi sailor convicted of rape, murder, or treason against their people is escorted to the edge of Ondra’s Mortar, stripped of their colors, and made to watch as their suolenet is dropped into the sea. Once this disavowal of the guilty is complete, the sailor is loaded onto a small rowboat with three days’ worth of rations and made to row directly into the storm. None who have faced this punishment are known to have returned. The storms, sea monsters, and meager provisions are each, in and of themselves, a death sentence.

The name for this punishment, Clussa’s Voyage, harks back to the mutiny of Clussa, the former

Vicecontessa of Fonteclaro. Clussa wished to splinter from the Príncipi fleet and head north of the Deadfire, where she intended to sell off her cargo to Rauatai and find somewhere permanent to settle. While she was not the captain of the ship on which she served, Clussa had purchased that ship prior to the exile and argued for her claim over it. As the rest of the Príncipi fleet had come to share investment in their limited cargo, for Clussa to say that she had sole ownership of hers did not fit their model of a society built on shared resources and equal stakes.

The sole mutineer stood her ground even as it became clear that no one would join her. Clussa’s captain—Emannio, the former steward of her household—ruled that if Clussa wanted to divide the Príncipi fleet, she would do so alone. Witnesses later claimed that Emannio pleaded with her to repent, but Clussa’s old-world dignity compelled her to remain unbowed. Weighing the precedent that her demonstration would set, Emannio had little choice but to set Clussa adrift on a dinghy with three days’ rations of food and water. Some sailors claimed she rowed north, toward her intended destination of Rauatai, while others say she veered south for the nearer shores of Ixamitl. None know for certain whether she survived the journey.

Clussa’s mutiny opened the way for a greater understanding of naval hierarchy and chain of command. Ownership and authority came to be determined by the needs of the community, showing how even a steward could lead in Príncipi culture. The lesson would persist for generations.

Dive for the Traitor’s Bounty

The Príncipi tradition of depositing traitors and their suolenets in the sea around Ondra’s Mortar has led to rumors of the imagined riches which lay unclaimed on the ocean floor. While pirate gangs of lesser means often use copper or wood for their suolenets, more accomplished and renowned gangs use gold, leaving many to wonder at the so-called Traitor’s Bounty of suolenets spreading across Ondra’s Mortar like a coral reef.

Many would consider it poor form to seek out these riches, judging the coins tainted by association with traitors. Some opportunistic pirates believe

that anyone with the nerve to fill their pockets with dropped suolenets from turbulent seas deserves to keep whatever they can carry back to their ship.

Only one crewman is reported to have laid hands on the Bounty. In 2820 AI, the Príncipi vessel *Freedom Rag* captured a Vailian supply ship carrying research and animancy tools bound for Neketaka. The pirates discovered, among the rest of the confounding equipment, an ornate and fully functional diving bell. With enough rope and determination, it could be made to reach the uncharted depths of the sea floor. While the application of the diving bell made sense to the pirates, the risks of such a deep voyage were less apparent. A pair of eager and curious mates took their places under the bell and signaled for the crew to lower them as far as the rope would allow.

The bell made its slow descent into the cold waters on the border of Ondra's Mortar, which were perpetually clouded from the nearby storms. Over time, the pair lost track of how long they had been under, breathing the same stagnant air and feeling the pressure build in intensity. Disaster struck as their air was gradually reduced. The duo wrestled each other for desperate, life-giving gasps until one knocked the other senseless, bashing his head against the surface of the bell and leaving him to drown in the black depths.

The crew of the *Freedom Rag*, late in judging that the dive had gone on long enough, laboriously cranked the bell back to the surface, taking with it an injured and delirious pirate who babbled incoherently about what he had seen on the ocean floor. He spoke of a golden valley stretching off into the distance, a hall of coral and bone, and leviathan-sized fish. The crew discounted his story until he produced a handful of golden suolenets clasped tightly in his palm.

Weighing the sailor's testimony, the captain of the *Freedom Rag* tried him for murder and consigned him to Clussa's Voyage. As his suolenets were forfeited back into the sea, the pirate dove in after them, never to resurface.

Many who whisper of the Traitor's Bounty conclude that the very proximity to that blighted wealth can drive a good sailor to terrible acts. Others say that the desperation which would send a ship voyaging after the Bounty is a curse in and

of itself. Either way, the Bounty seems intent on pulling good sailors to the same watery end, and is well worth avoiding.

Pirate Customs

Constant and widespread seafaring has led the Príncipi to adopt unique customs tailored to their lives in the Deadfire. These trappings of their self-made culture can extend to anything as insignificant as sea shanties or as dire and meaningful as naval diplomacy.

• **SONGS OF THE HIGH SEAS** It is typical for sailors laboring above decks or in the rigging to raise their voice in song. The practice encourages a sense of fellowship and celebration of culture. Less standard is for a ship's crew to use song as a means of detailed communication.

Aboard a Príncipi ship, vocal talent and quick thinking go hand in hand. When two vessels cross paths, their crews take turns shouting across the broadside, trading songs about their adventures and what bounties or challenges they encountered on the high seas. The shanties are never literal or overt, as their meaning is intentionally hidden in metaphor and the structure of the ballad. A stanza shorter than the one which preceded it could hint at a set of coordinates. A song of unrequited love could tell of a sunken merchant vessel or a narrow escape from a sea monster, and the distinction would depend on seemingly inconsequential details. Any mention of thunder traditionally hints at Rauataians at sea, while references to the stars imply the Vailian Republics. In a Príncipi crew, the profession of songsmith is as dangerous as it is celebrated, for any error in interpreting or passing on songs can mean the difference between life and death.

Some question the value of this tradition for its staggering lack of practicality. Príncipi sailors argue that it is the tradition itself which they value over its function. Forging a competent and complex riddle of a song is a test of a crew's unity through a characteristically flamboyant and theatrical demonstration. Pirates who cannot sing together are scarcely able to fight or sail together, and many a captain would boast of their crew's vocal talent far in advance of their combat prowess. The songs themselves are also a game and diversion for the crews to puzzle over, an escape from the quiet hours where they can pore over new verses and interpret their clever intricacies. Ever since its founding, Dunnage has hosted an annual singing competition, where

the Consuaglo (with some impartiality) act as judges and grant the winning crew a token of favor from each of their vessels.

♦ **FLAGS OF REPUTATION AND INTENT** Pirate flags are most notably flown as statements of intent: surrender or die. When advancing on a merchant ship and its armed retainer, a Príncipi vessel traditionally raises a black flag to convey this dire ultimatum. It borders on bad form to decorate the flag with any identifying insignia beyond the color. When a ship takes to the high seas, egos are understood to be left at port. Furthermore, no Príncipi sailor would want their movements tracked and reported on, lest they put the whole fleet in danger.

This has not stopped others from shirking good form and adopting unique standards which spread their infamy. Captain Tevolo of the *Madiccho* came to be known by her black flag sporting two skeletal hands joined together—meaning that she wanted the exchange of goods to end favorably, but would accept a less amicable alternative. Captain Viscesse of the *Rite of Passage* flew a flag with a red harpoon, boasting of his prowess as a hunter of sea monsters. Captain Bugasso of *Her Feistiness* showed the standard of a snapped blade, identifying him as a disgraced former officer of the Vailian Republics. The list goes on.

Within the Príncipi fleet, flags can also serve less intimidating purposes. Basic colors or patterns identify their captains, bearing, and cargo. Flags taken from enemy ships will show intentional tears or other defacements. Flags which communicate a ship's accomplishments have their own category of heraldry.

♦ **TRIUMPHS** In the tradition of displaying flags with pride, the Príncipi love nothing more than triumphs—flags of achievement which decorate the lines from the mast to the deck. These flags are small, one to two feet in length, and feature basic colors and designs, but their meaning is not diminished for their simplicity.

Triumphs signify victories in battle, and most often stand for other sailors of repute or even infamous pirate captains. Many a ship sailing the Deadfire waters is judged on the basis of how many triumphs it flies, and spells out its own tale of victory, suspense, and daring—one flag at a time.

♦ **VIRTUES:** Tradition, nobility, freedom, unity

The more seasoned generations of Príncipi recall the days of Old Vailia with nostalgia, and still conduct themselves as members of a wandering royalty. In their view, cleaving to the values of the past is how the Príncipi should orient their moral

BELLY-UP FISH: a raider of Huana ports.

CANNON AND SKULL: one who makes sport of outrunning Rauataian ships.

TWO FANGS: one who has survived multiple raids by ocean naga.

MUSICAL NOTES: one who has won the Dunnage sea shanty contest.

SHOOTING STARS: one who targets Vailian ships.

compass. Fresh recruits who lack any Vailian connection are more liable to listen to this opinion with patience, though they themselves see the Príncipi as the last bastion of free thought and expression. To them, command of the sea is what makes their loose-knit collective unique and superior compared to the landlocked Deadfire powers. In spite of their differing philosophies, all Príncipi sailors believe that their ship is home, their crew family, and their way of life worth defending.

♦ **VICES:** Greed, rule of strength, decentralization

Group cohesion and effectiveness are not traits grown overnight, but the result of long-term experience fighting side by side and snapping to attention at the same orders. Over years this connection can mature into the Príncipi's greatest asset, but it contrasts with more organized naval powers like the Royal Deadfire Company. In that regimented chain of command, any seaman is prepared for reassignment on another vessel, where they are expected to slip into their new role with ease. A Príncipi sailor who serves under one captain may find another command stifling, or more readily disagree with the shipboard rules.

Only the strong survive in the Príncipi—a quality which extends to ships, crews, and even captains. While the fleet lives by this decree, it has also been the justification for dozens of misguided mutinies. Having lost the faith of the crew, an otherwise worthy captain can be removed from power and replaced with a more bombastic and less cunning counterpart. The crew endures for a time, riding the wave of enthusiasm that anointed their champion with authority in the first place. This can only last so long before a lack of experience or uneven temperament on the new captain's part recommends them for yet another mutiny.





CHAPTER IV
LANGUAGES

HUANA

The Huana alphabet consists of thirteen consonants and is recognizable for using repetitive syllables that usually end in one of five vowels. Engravings which survived the Deadfire cataclysms and the millennia that followed suggest that the language has gone largely unchanged, although the cultural gaps between the ancient and modern Huana account for some notable exceptions. A capable archaeologist could read the faded inscriptions on a Huana tomb with near-literal clarity yet lack the perspective to understand the meaning those who inscribed it originally intended.

Some of the phrases found in ancient sources which defy modern comprehension include:

- *Mehena o rik*: “Long coils of the eel.” Thought to be a term for long life, such as wishing a neighbor or a beloved a long and bountiful journey through Kohopa. Confusion arises regarding the nature of the coils, which could refer to complications or periods of strife, in which case the phrase is a curse.
- *Skua wātana*: “Wurm-song tide.” Refers to a transitory period of time spent with a dragon. Though the nature of such an engagement is unclear, it suggests that the ancient Huana were more closely associated with the creatures of their environment.
- *Wihana o ma*: “Promise of the deep, dignity-bound.” An old term for Ngati’s covenant with the Huana, the implications of which are not fully grasped.

THE people of Neketaka are dishonest before all else. They will make any promise, or tell any lie, if it fills their purse with foreigner coin. Last night in the Wild Mare, I overheard the cousin of a hazanui complaining about the exchange rate. He had traded a pair of oas for a palm full of wooden beads. How the dancers laughed when he tried to pay them for their expert attention!

I’ve had my clerks draw up guides so that none of our dignitaries suffer a similar fate, but in many ways the damage is done. After a fancy piece of business doubled our land rights on some insignificant chunk of rock, Prince Aruihi modified the value of azata for the third time in as many months. We have the coin to compensate, but these childish reprisals tire our already exhausted patience for diplomacy.

When you speak before the Sengretta, I hope you remember to ask how much longer I must “blunt my teeth” (as the local expression goes) idly chattering with these natives. We look forward to taking more decisive action for a change.

—Letter home, by Matio Bellis

- *Nauwa o puāha*: “Cradle of converging rivers.” A possible translation for the name “Ukaizo.” Whether it is meant to be literal or steeped in metaphor is a subject of scholarly debate.

RAUATAIAN

The Rauataian tongue traces its roots back to ancient Huana, and remains in most respects identical to its source material. However, millennia of cultural development while separated from the



homeland culminated in new grammar rules and structures to the language, making it in some ways unrecognizable to those who speak in the original form. The alphabets are still similar, though the vocabulary has deviated over time. Spoken Rauataian also adopted sounds of Vailian and Eld Aedyran, which are represented in the alphabet.

Rauataians tend to emphasize proverbial sayings in much of their day-to-day conversation (whether they recognize it or not). The literal meaning of such phrases might prove confusing to a foreigner. To a Huana who understands the words themselves, being deprived of their context or deeper meaning represents a more significant struggle.

Popular Rauataian sayings include:

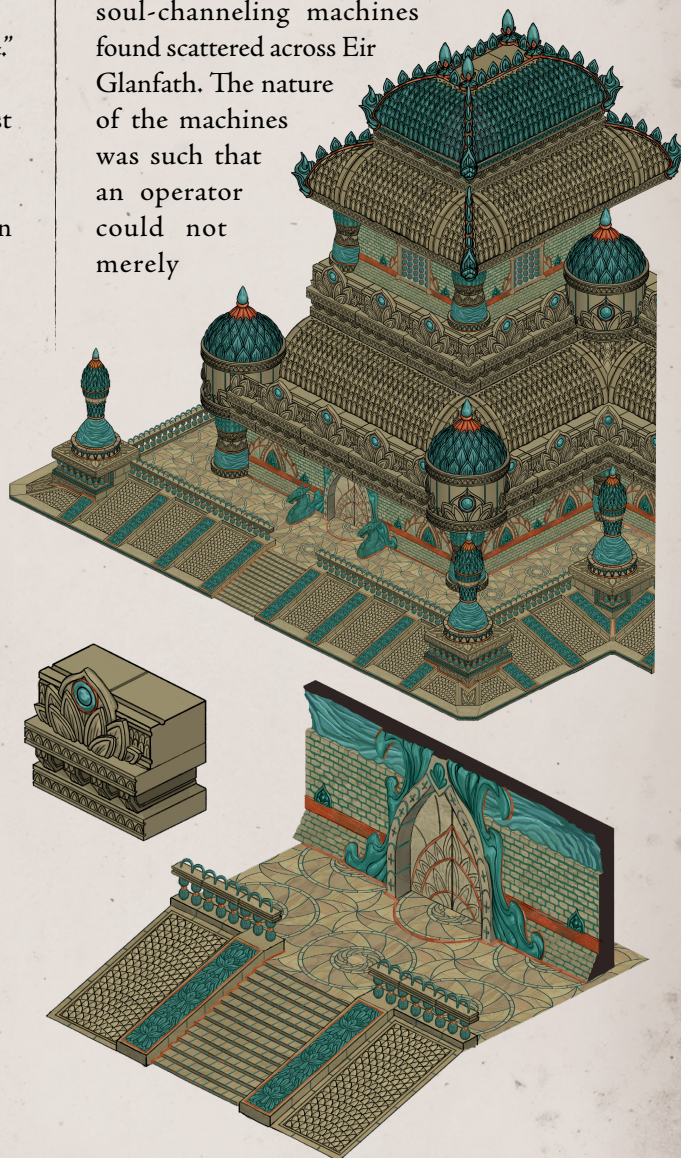
- ✦ “Better to shave a bear than your captain’s patience.”
- ✦ “What does it matter which direction the east wind blows?”
- ✦ “Strike before the enemy has glimpsed the crown of your head.”
- ✦ “Truth is a snake knotted to the flagpole.”



ENGWITHAN

The language of the ancient Engwithans has never been heard, much less fully understood, by modern kith. Scholars who boast of having translated Engwithan inscriptions are typically either charlatans or are gravely mistaken. Engwithan runes are something of a novelty in academic circles, where the reputation goes that one ambitious student of every incoming class boasts of achieving some breakthrough in interpreting this evasive tongue. Such revelations are politely discredited, without exception.

Animancers of the Eastern Reach have speculated that language alone could command the soul-channeling machines found scattered across Eir Glanfath. The nature of the machines was such that an operator could not merely





speak the necessary command words, but needed to understand them as well—making for a significant safeguard against future tampering.

STORM SPEAK

Deadfire sailors are accustomed to finding oddities in the waters of the archipelago—be they treasure, danger, or some indecipherable mystery better left untouched. What defy all comprehension are the extremely rare sightings of derelict craft limping out of Ondra's Mortar and the crew members found piloting these wrecks.

On rare documented occasions, trading or expedition ships have sighted unusual flotsam on the fringes of the impassable storm barrier. This is remarkable in and of itself, as most seafaring kith understand the obvious danger of Ondra's Mortar and give it a wide berth. What makes the

IHAVE not survived this long so that the secrets of the dead could elude me. Language is as passive and permeable as any ruin, so it should not be this difficult to find my way past the antechamber of Engwithan grammar. Then why do these runes evade me as if by willful intention?

I know . . . much. More than anyone has reasoned in the last thousand years. But from what I gather of the runes I have deciphered so far, Engwithan is more than words and what they accomplish together. There is power in the edges and accents of every symbol, and that power goes deeper than my reckoning by far. If I were to chain those runes together into meaning, I don't know what I couldn't accomplish.

That alone is enough to frighten me. Not that fear has ever stopped me in the past.

—Journal of Icantha

THE ship held herself together by stubborn will or the blessings of the gods—pick one, as we couldn't grasp what feat of woodwork or resin held her battered spine in place. Her crew was but a single lady, wrists bound to what passed for a wheel to keep her upright, though she had long since lost that battle and slumped to her knees. We cut the poor lass down and took stock of her. She wore a wrapping of many-colored threads, and the blade at her side was as sharp as the truth itself.

Course she was already rotting by the time we got to her, so we couldn't make out much. She had a second mouth encircling her neck, ringed with sharp teeth. A pair of stubby antlers fanned back from her ears. Godlike or god-cursed, we sailed back toward the fleet and gave her a proper burial away from the Mortar which had claimed her.

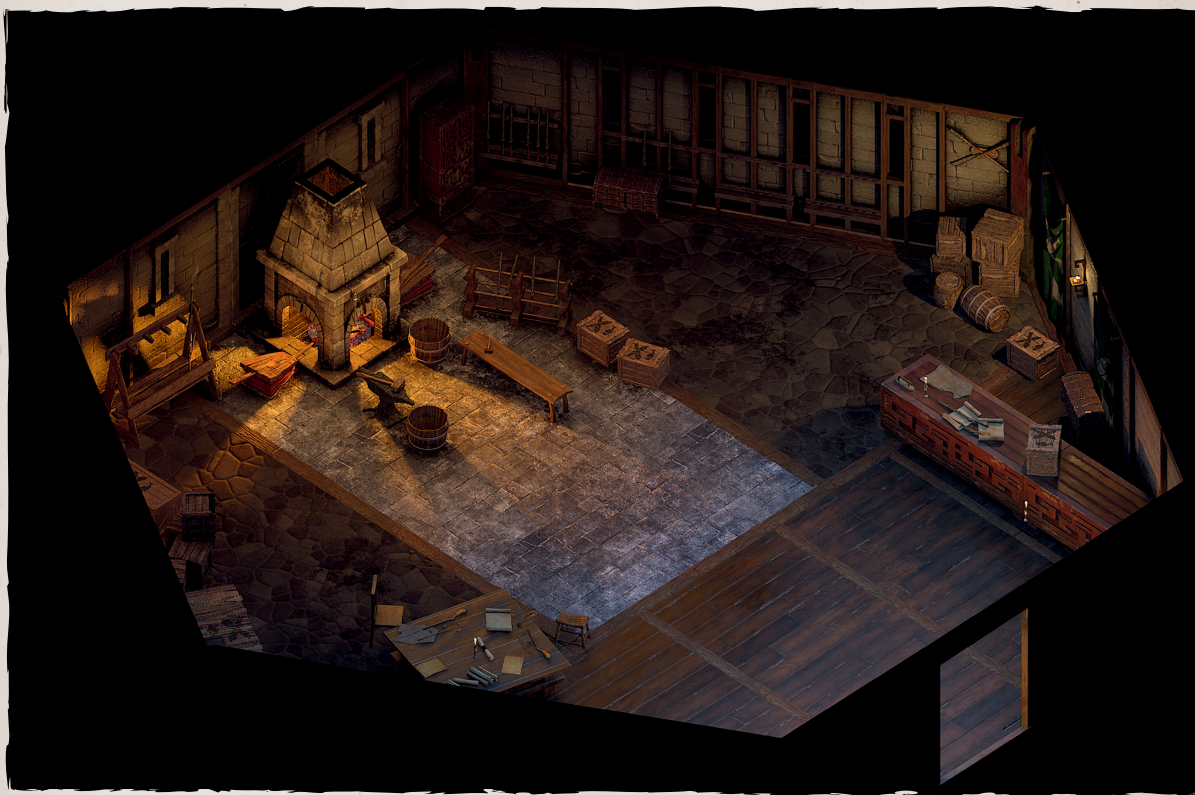
I'll never forget that . . . thing she sailed. Wood and canvas, to be sure, but nothing which I've seen in a shipwright's workshop. She endured long enough to cross the Mortar, which is more than I can say for anything in a Deadfire fleet.

—Captain's log, Exile's Comfort

phenomena doubly unusual is that the pieces of wood or sail floating among the debris match the shapes of no recognized ships found anywhere else in Eora.

Even rarer cases have involved kith finding intact vessels which persistently made their way from the far side of the storms. The ships are always battered to the point of uselessness, floating in the equivalent of a daze and seemingly out of unconscious habit. Their craftsmanship has struck hardened sailors as being especially well made and intuitively designed, but none have stayed afloat long enough to be retrieved or studied.

The occupants of these ships are men and women of fiery red hair and faces of no common ethnicity. Captain's logs chronicling the discovery of these storm-tossed kith are widely contradictory in their descriptions, including embellishments like extra limbs or eyes made of precious stones. In every case of such encounters, corpses are all that remain of the storm-tossed strangers, owing to a combination of wounds taken at sea and malnourishment from a long voyage.







CHAPTER V
LOCAL CURRENCY

LOCAL CURRENCY

The sudden influx of foreign travelers, settlers, and money in the Deadfire has contributed to an increasingly complex economy. In this environment of uncertain conversion rates, counterfeiters and confidence men have preyed upon disoriented newcomers by the boatload. The harbormasters of major ports have taken to issuing pocket guides which detail the appearance and value of local currency.

COPPER PIRE (VAILIAN REPUBLICS)

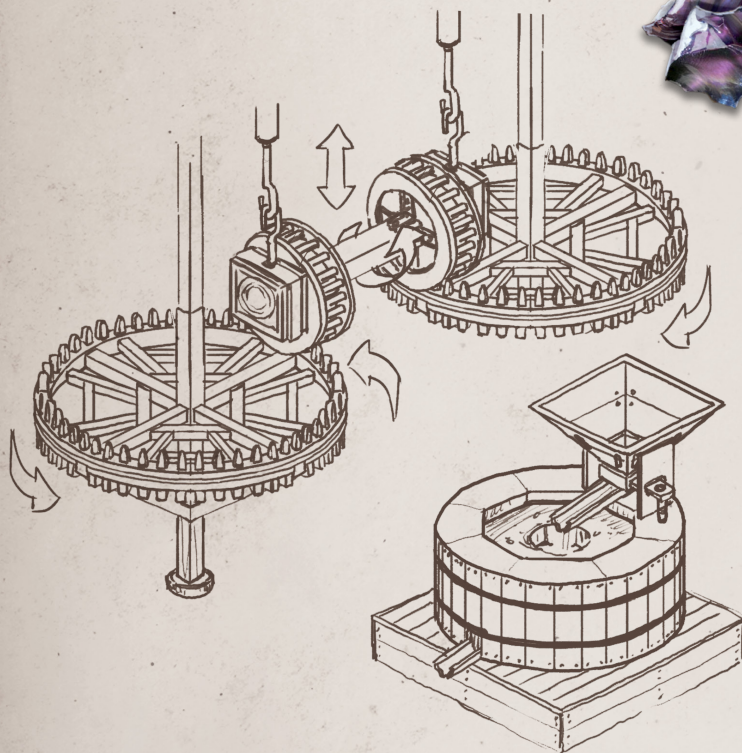


The base currency of the Vailian Republics, universally recognized due to the expansiveness of their trading empire. *Pire* is also the Vailian word for “pear,” owing to the coin’s distinctive shape.

AZATA SHELL (HUANA)



An egg-shaped, multicolored shell harvested from the azata snail. This forms the base value of Huana currency.



OBSIDIAN FLAKE (HUANA)



The product of a region rich in volcanic activity, obsidian has a more literal value to the Huana. Shards of obsidian are carefully knapped to hone their edges, making them suitable for use as cutting tools, spear points, or arrowheads.

AZATA NUI SHELL (HUANA)



The common azata snail fits comfortably in the palm of a hand. Azata nui grow up to three times the size, weighing as much as an overindulged house pet.

BABY PEARL (HUANA)



Oyster divers frequently retrieve small pearls in the course of their labors. Lacking the distinction or value of mature pearls, these are passed among kith as a more casually accepted currency.

OBSIDIAN SPALL (HUANA)



Larger chunks of obsidian are used in tools or shaped into flakes. Their diversity of application increases their relative value in the eyes of the Huana.



AZATA SHELL STRING (HUANA)



A string of five azata shells of exceptional similarity to each other is valued exponentially more than five dissimilar shells. Foreigners unaccustomed to distinguishing one shell from another often miss obvious details, making the shell string the easiest and most commonly counterfeited sum of currency handed off to outsiders.

BRASS TEO (RAUATAI)



The teo, meaning “hand” in Rauataian, is the kingdom’s base currency, so named after the common saying “the hand performs the labor.”

BRONZE HON (RAUATAI)



During a time of economic strain, Rauatai’s ranga nui wanted to accelerate the country’s economy without creating additional currencies. Instead he ordered the royal mint to include a deep depression in the casting of the bronze ōa, making the coins easy to snap in half and trade in parts of lesser value. The bronze hon is worth exactly one half of a bronze ōa for obvious reasons.

BRONZE ŌA (RAUATAI)



This large and intricately decorated coin is one of the most commonly traded forms of currency in Rauatai.

OLD BRONZE ŌA (RAUATAI)

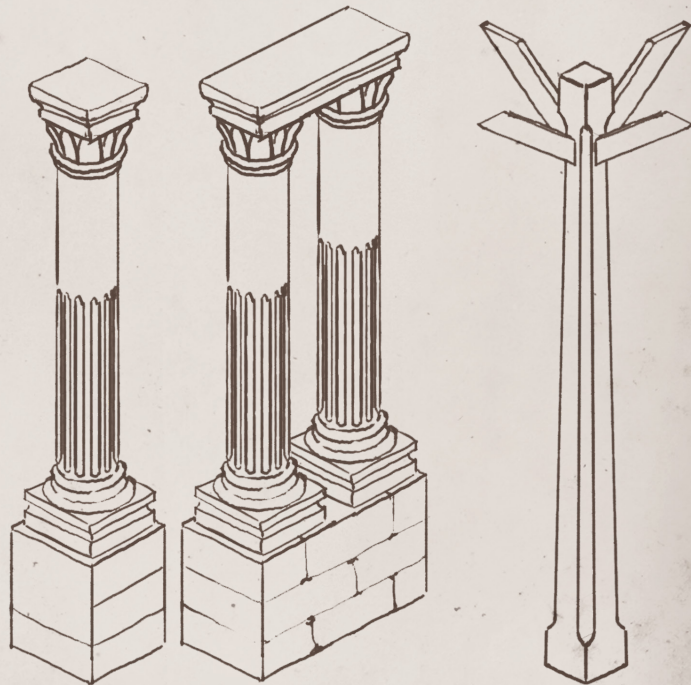
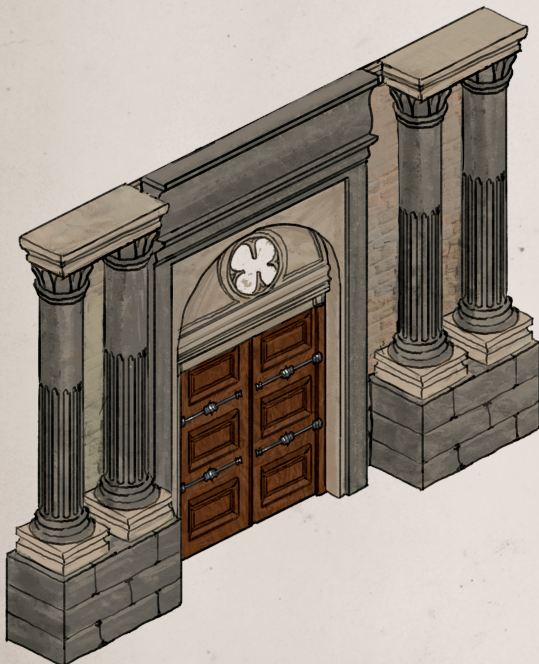


These coins predate the ranga nui’s order to modify the casting of the bronze ōa, and command a slightly higher value for their metal content. Younger Rauataians jokingly refer to them as “grandpa’s ōa,” and often keep them as curiosities.

SILVER UTOKI (RAUATAI)



These highly valued coins are used primarily for large and often symbolic transactions. The obverse side shows the face of the ranga nui at the time of its stamping, while the reverse side always depicts a crown.







CHAPTER VI
ADVANCES IN ANIMANCY

ART AND INDUSTRY

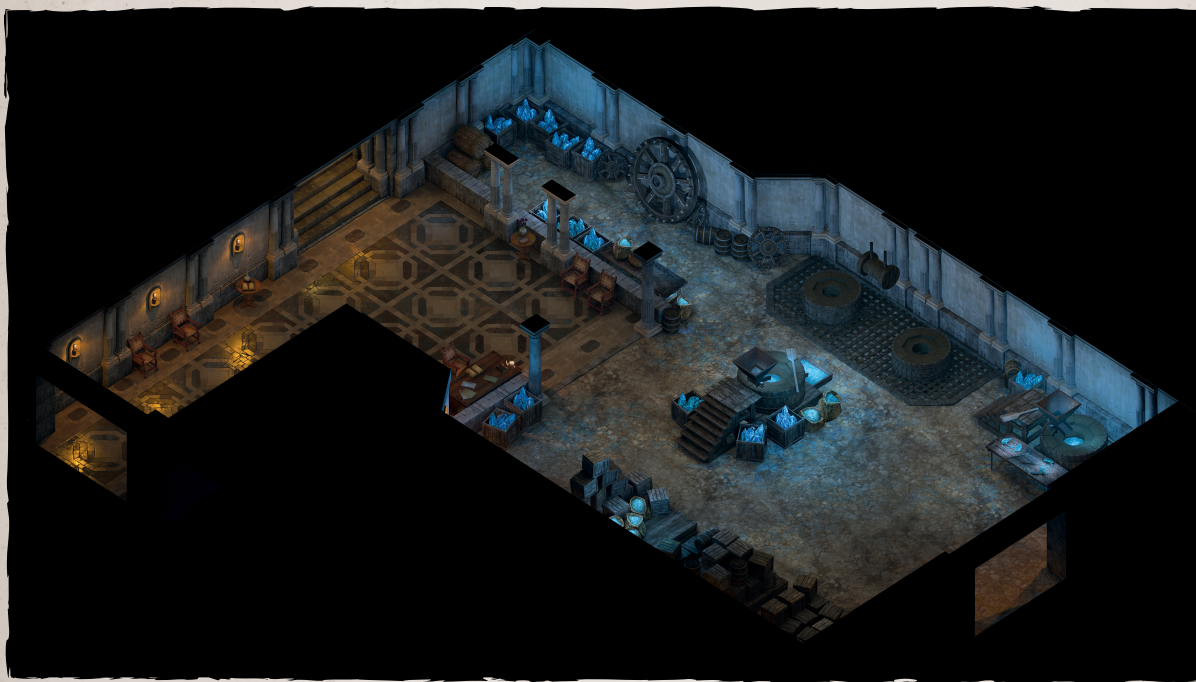
The energy housed within the vibrant souls of kith is an undisputed fact of life in Eora. Accessing and harnessing that energy makes for a risky endeavor, available only to the sharpest minds and most practiced hands. Aedyran scholars discovered the means and possible application of soul manipulation hundreds of years ago, though they banned the practice on the grounds that it offended the gods. Colonial settlers in the Dyrwood later brought animancy to the forefront of public attention by exploiting the ruins of the ancient Engwithans. This progressed the art to the point that modern animancers regularly accomplish what the Engwithans may have only dreamed was possible. The presence of soul-channeling adra and the dormant machines of the Engwithans augmented the studies of animancers a thousandfold, opening the way for a renewed and enlightened understanding of their art and the benefits it could bring. With more kith flocking to the Deadfire than ever before, the islands are poised to take the stage for animancy's next and greatest innovations.

LUMINOUS ADRA RESEARCH AND TREATMENTS

The expansive capacity of luminous adra allows animancers to study previously unheard-of volumes of soul energy. Outside of the Deadfire, where living adra is dearly acquired, few allowances are made for trial and error. Luminous adra opened the way for animancers to put the most modest samples through hundreds of rigorous tests and yield previously inaccessible results.

By refining and distilling luminous adra into a liquid form, animancers created a potent cure-all, restoring the vigor, health, and youthfulness of anyone who used it. The benefits go deeper than cosmetic or quality of life improvements, however. Animancers who studied the long-term effects of luminous adra judged that the souls of those exposed to it possessed ten times the vibrancy of ordinary kith. It is still too early to appreciate the ramifications of these results, but animancers have wondered if more vibrant souls will have any effect, whether beneficial or deleterious, on Berath's Wheel and the cycle of reincarnation.

When smoked in a tobacco or svef pipe, luminous adra causes expressive visions and feelings of euphoria.





WE tried it on the Huana first, skeptical that it would yield any outcome on the people with greater exposure to their native adra. The Sengretta would not let us test it on our colonists until we knew for certain that it was safe. Much to our mutual delight, the experiment was a success. Perhaps . . . too successful. The Huana enjoyed their new vitality, and then they began to “enjoy” each other. Physically separating them was no deterrent at all to their enthusiasm.

This piqued the attention of the noble houses (though Hylea knows how any of them learned about our experiment), and the demands for refined adra grew in volume. I understand that the nightlife in Queen’s Berth has grown significantly more interesting. Not that anyone has proffered me an invitation.

—Applied Adra, Vol. II

Animancers caution that the substance should be taken with care and restraint, their predominant theory suggesting that recreational users are experiencing echoes of other people’s past lives. The dangers of this method were not grasped until some of the earliest adopters began to exhibit strange behavior, such as conversing with invisible specters, losing touch with reality, and experiencing past-life regression in real time. Otherwise sane and normal smokers took on the qualities of madness observed in very old and troubled Awakened kith (whose awareness of past lives arose to the forefront of their minds), who found themselves ill equipped to contend with the mental incursion of the spirit world.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE BEYOND

A comprehensive understanding of what animancers can do with soul energy makes for contentious debates in their academic circles. The possibilities are unknowably broad, and few animancers agree on the limitations of the tools at their disposal. The Brackenbury Sanitarium (2729 AI–2823 AI) represented the first stride in setting coherent and consistent benchmarks for animancy’s possible applications, and the downfall of that

institute proved a significant setback. Factoring in the obstacles of ignorance and inexperience, animancers are more practiced by far at detecting and measuring soul energy than they are at using it toward a given pursuit.

In the Deadfire, however, simply measuring the energy of luminous adra has made a difference to the art as a whole. Animancers who study Deadfire adra in its native form have theorized that its capacity is not merely greater than the non-luminous variety, but nigh inexhaustible. Cleaving to this information, practitioners give credence to a remote but intriguing possibility—that they are not, in fact, measuring the soul energy of luminous adra, but that of a neighboring realm of existence.

Since testimony from Watchers points to adra as the mechanism for crossing from the known world to the Beyond, it is possible that animancers are detecting the very door through which all beings travel to reach their next life. And if such a metaphysical construct can be measured, could not physical matter interact with that barrier as well?

From their permanent installation on Neketaka, Vailian animancers research this distant hope. They prepare for the day when intrepid travelers can summon the courage to breach the threshold of existence using luminous adra as the nexus, and find whatever they may on the other side.

LOCAL INSPIRATION

Interacting with the Huana has also caused animancers to reflect on the relevance of Deadfire mythology and tradition in relation to their studies. In addition to their surprise and bewilderment regarding the accurate soul-reading practices of Mataru priests, outsiders have wondered if the oldest stories of the tribes reflect an unexpectedly intricate cultural understanding of adra and the spirit world.

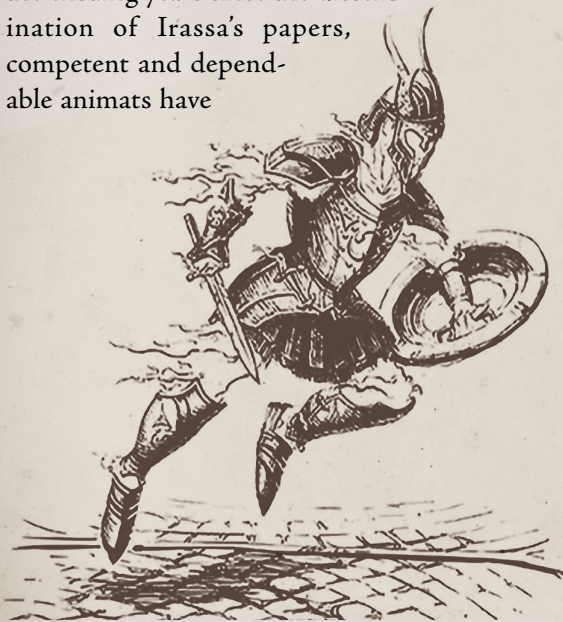
The tale of Rikuhu, for example, is steeped in imagery and relationships which reflect known qualities of the natural world. As the passage of life into death follows the digestion of twin eels, the repeating image of colossal ribs presiding over the process on either side reflects adra’s relationship with souls as a nexus to the Beyond,

albeit symbolically. This and other stories have compelled many animancers to devote time and resources to cataloging tribal myth and folklore, poring over every possible interpretation in hopes of unlocking some new revelation that could assist their understanding of soul manipulation.

ANIMAT STUDIES

Engwithans were the unrivaled masters of creating animats—hulking constructs given some semblance of life through dense accumulations of soul energy. These single-minded entities took on uncomplicated responsibilities for the most part, largely figuring into the guardianship of tombs, machines, or any other sites worth preserving across the ages. Kith have attempted to reproduce the art of the Engwithans with mixed results, creating in the process some inconsistent creatures and accidental successes, but their processes lack the same refinement as that of the Engwithans.

A deeper understanding of soul compression has led to breakthroughs in animat studies. Luminous adra circumvents the problem of fitting soul energy into a limited receptacle. While traditional methods were failure prone and relied on a margin of error to set low expectations, animats created with the aid of luminous adra are significantly more robust and dependable over long periods of time. In the ensuing years since the dissemination of Irassa's papers, competent and dependable animats have



PFEH. My colleagues persist in harping about “demonstrating practical application.” We are poised to reach beyond the veil of known reality, and this does not satisfy investors? Per complancanet, it is too much for the patience of any scholar. Everything is about the bottom line where the trading company is concerned, and this marvel will not be allowed to exist unless we can forecast profits on it like common merchants!

If they insist on hamstringing their potential, then I will take matters into my own hands. Rather than pace before the locked door, I will tear it from its hinges. Whatever comes spilling out in my wake will be for my colleagues to scratch their heads over as I am battered by revelation after revelation to come . . .

—Journal fragment

become the new norm for guarding the belongings of those who can afford such luxuries.

BRACKENBURY REMEMBERED

The tragic loss of the Brackenbury Sanitarium in 2823 AI proved in some respects to be a blessing in disguise. After the ransacking and burning of animancy's stronghold in the Dyrwood, the few Brackenbury-educated animancers who survived were free to take their studies abroad and pursue more ambitious fields of research. Without the constrictions of a formal body to observe, record, and ultimately dictate their efforts, animancers found themselves once again free to operate as they had done in the past—unshackled from restrictions, save for those of whichever wealthy patron bankrolled their efforts.

In spite of this newfound autonomy, many animancers cherished Brackenbury as their first and only home, and so maintained the research-driven and semiethical code held by all former students. Even without a central governing body, animancers remain true to each other, enthusiastic in their belief that the work itself bridges personal conflicts or differences in opinion.





CHAPTER VII
CHURCHES OF EORA

GODS AND THEIR WORSHIPERS

The gods of Eora represent a broad portfolio of mortal concerns, which leaves the methods of giving them obeisance open to interpretation. Some devout kith gather in formal, ostentatious churches for worship while others find the peace of the divine in stables, basements, mountaintops, or pools of water. In times of need, kith have been known to gather around less popular interpretations of religious doctrine, adopting unique philosophies of how best to use their few precious years in service of the divine.

In most divinely inspired organizations, the devout focus on a god's many faces and aspects at once. Groups which concentrate on a singular aspect of the deity espouse only a sliver of the god or goddess's total portfolio, though their worship is more focused and intentional in nature. What kith choose to worship at any given time often reflects circumstances around Eora, and makes for a gallery of intrigue, conflict, and oddity.



CHILDREN OF THE DAWNSTARS

After the death of Saint Waidwen (Saint's War, 2808 AI), melancholy swept through the theocratic colony of Readceras. Eothasians struggled to find meaning in the defeat of their god. Scrambling to restore order, battle-hardened priests transformed

their government into a penitential regency which could function until Eothas inevitably returned to reclaim his throne. All the while, the citizens of Readceras who didn't flee the vengeance of their enemies turned on their neighbors, rooting out faithlessness wherever it could be found and blaming it for their downfall. These were times of stress, accusation, guilt, and cruelty.

On top of their other woes, the Readceran crops of dye-producing vorlas plants failed to yield a harvest, which led to a crippling economic downturn. Some ten thousand of the faithful left the colony to seek employment where they could find it, and where persecution would not follow. Aiming their ships toward the rising sun was an act as symbolic as it was practical, narrowing their purpose on a trajectory with a symbol of hope and rebirth.

To the delight of these wayward pilgrims, their crops took to Deadfire soil better than they had in Readceras, where the Aedyran emperor had always insisted on planting crops which were ill suited to the region. Those who persisted in farming eventually settled on peaberries as a hardy staple crop. Others relocated to colonial settlements or Huana villages, where they carved out positions of usefulness in tribal society and spread their Eothasian faith without fear of oppression.

Owing to their selfless ambitions, the Dawnstars have enjoyed favorable dealings with the Huana. As far as the trading companies are concerned, close involvement with local affairs has earned the

HONEST work and labor brought Eothas to Readceras. No reason to think that more of the same couldn't bring him back.

I was there when Waidwen's head exploded in a bolt of divine light, his stringy hair replaced by a flaming crown . . . and I was among the few who ran in the opposite direction. I don't know if it was Waidwen or Eothas who rallied us to war, but it was a misguided

thing. If he came back again, I expect he'd have a different idea about how to get his message across.

All this talk of a big green statue rising from Caed Nua? It's not the Eothas I know. But then, neither was Waidwen. I'm the only constant in that reckoning, so maybe it's me who's got his head on backward.

—Journal of Brother Pelocan

Dawnstars a reputation as petty irritants, though nothing approaching violence has broken out over largely political and ethical conflicts.

BRIGHT SHEPHERDS

In the midst of this political upheaval in Readceras, a fraction of the citizens who held back from joining Waidwen's militaristic advance turned away from their home colony with disappointment and sorrow. They did not mourn the death of Waidwen, but judged the departure of Eothas as a call to change their ways. Instead of inflicting their faith on the world with the sword and pitchfork, their goal was to bring Eothas's light to the dark places of the world—be they crypts, forest trails, or homes of the poor.

The Bright Shepherds sought to escape those who would vilify them both near and abroad, and departed Readceras under cover of night. Having invested much of their time and resources in working with tallow and beeswax, they were able to support themselves on the sale of candles. Many a Dyrwoodan lord who illuminated their keep (and cursed all Readcerans) unknowingly did so by the light of Eothasian candles.

Rituals and demonstrations across the continent necessarily went underground, save for the rare instances when the worship of Eothas could be overlooked in plain sight. One such practice traces back to the peaceful Bright Shepherd expatriates, who made regular pilgrimages between Dyrwood and the borders of their former homeland. Rather than any particular sites or landmarks, the journey itself was their objective, as they would place lit candles along the path between nations. Theirs was not a fanatical devotion to Eothas, but a mild and hopeful one, in which they invited their god to find his way home. The candles represented a path outlined for Eothas to return when his people needed him most.

The Bright Shepherds' continued existence depends partially on the Night Market, a secretive and devout sect of Eothasians who ensure that their peers are able to worship freely and unhindered. When bounty hunters or mobs track down Eothasians, the Night Market acts to deter or

THERE wasn't an excuse in all the world accounting for that many dropped candles stretching out from Godhammer Citadel. Most had guttered out, but the rest lit my path through the dense wood like I was the Shattered God himself, making the long journey back to my damned flock. Sometimes I think these zealots are so guilt ridden that they want to get caught. Most of the time I don't care.

Found a clutch of them praying at a campfire, hoods drawn up in silence. Maybe they were focusing on their god in the flames, because they didn't know I was there until I cleared my throat and hefted my crossbow. Gave up without a fight, they did. I trussed them up and started the long march back the way I'd come, and back to frontier justice.

Funny thing. When I kicked dirt over their fire, could have sworn that I saw a pair of deep, sorrowful eyes looking out from the embers. I try my best not to think about what that meant. I try real hard.

—Bounty Hunter's Journal, by Anonymous, found propped against a tree in Gilded Vale

waylay these figures before they catch up with their charges. Being both pacifists and often isolated in the Dyrwoodan wilderness, the Bright Shepherds are some of the Market's most vulnerable clients.

CHAMPIONS OF THE LETTER

Woedica is a favored deity of Eora's administrative clerks and more litigious-minded kith. In keeping with her portfolio of compacts and law, Champions of the Letter are devoted to the rigid accuracy of all documentation. Their members represent a broad swath of cultures who owe no allegiance to any government. Rather than seek official sponsorship or charter, they sternly avoid partnerships which could compromise their objectivity.

Their self-imposed duty is to closely review and edit any official documentation, with no scrap of parchment considered too insignificant for their attention. If a colonial governor requisitions

materials to fix a crumbling sewer grate, the likelihood that a Champion of the Letter would intercept and review the request is startlingly high. When documents are found to contain misinformation, contradiction, or an otherwise innocent lack of clarity, the Champions put intense pressure on officials to have their wording redrafted in a matter befitting the dignity and trust of their station.

Due to the meddlesome and unsolicited nature of their activities, the Champions are widely antagonized. Harmless as they may seem, they create additional work in order to satisfy their fanatical attention to detail. Government officials pray to Woedica not to draw the ire of her followers, and

THEY closed down my shop for their production of *The Faceless Mask*. I tried to explain there's a stage not twenty blocks down, but the Lady gave me a stern look and motioned for the actors to unload their wagon. I've been paid for the inconvenience, and paid well, but I'm starting to doubt that I'll live to spend the coin.

The actors, as I assumed they were, spoke not a word as they donned yellow robes and wooden masks. The plainness of it all, the silence of it . . . well, it got me to feeling like this was a ritual and not a play. They positioned themselves in the aisles of my shop and held as still as statues. Then, one by one, they raised their fingers to point directly at me! Summoning up my courage, I asked the Lady what it was all about.

"This is their production," she said, "and you are the audience. It will be over soon."

I fled into the stockroom and started scribbling on the back of this old invoice. As far as I know they're still out there, standing and waiting and . . . I don't know what! If this is a show, it's a cruel one. And if it's not . . .

To whoever finds my last words, pray that the Lady and her troupe don't look in your direction and see a stage waiting to be filled.

—Fearful scrawlings, logged in the archives
of the Knights of the Crucible

those who endure long careers without any intervention by her Champions congratulate themselves on their achievement.

The Champions' most fervent enemies are the duces bells of the Vailian Republics. Owing to a combination of clerical errors and the intentionally broad and interpretable use of language in Republic law, the Champions have refused to pay taxes for the last century. Those who have been caught and imprisoned for exploiting their legal loophole solemnly vow that their order is happy and willing to pay taxes as soon as government documentation is corrected to fit their model of perfection. This has earned the Champions a semi-inaccurate reputation as an organization of lawbreakers. Their numbers annually grow as tax evaders seek sanctuary and find themselves devoted to alternative lifestyles as holy criminals.

SORROWS OF THE FORGOTTEN DREAM

It seems a contradiction for Wael, god of mystery and obfuscation, to have an organized following. The god's devotees roost in unlikely places (back alleys, pleasure dens, the halls of ancient ruins, other churches, etc.) to celebrate and remember the dreams which they forget upon waking. They do not consider the meaning of their dreams as possessing any intrinsic value or prophecy. Rather, dreams are the divine's way of voicing the meaninglessness of all existence and the ephemeral nature of sanity.

Referring to themselves as "Sorrows" recognizes the burden of melancholy they place on their strange enlightenment. The fragility of reality offers little comfort. The Sorrows of Wael do nothing to control how many acolytes join their casual ranks, but they prefer their numbers to be limited, believing that only a fraction of the population is equipped to handle the truth.

LADIES OF THE AVIARY

The chaos surrounding the Hollowborn crisis in the Dyrwood (2809 AI) exposed an uneasy truth—that discreet groups have worked to alter



information or suppress it from the public. The magnitude of damage which the Leaden Key or the Hand Occult inflicted upon Eora may never be fully comprehended, but the Ladies of the Aviary work to ensure that future harm is mitigated, if not avoided altogether, even if they know little about the foe they quietly rally against. Hylea being patroness of creative expression in all forms, her Ladies gather to ensure that any artistic endeavors go uninterrupted.

The Ladies are enemies of censors, editors, and business owners who don't cooperate with creatively inclined clients. When a troupe of actors wishes to stage a play, the Ladies represent their interests and coerce anyone who denies them a venue, no matter how outrageous the location. When a song is composed with intent to be presented in a public square, the Ladies ensure by any means necessary that the local guard is nowhere near the site of the performance. The cost of the Ladies' protection is

a modest donation, and the thoroughness of the Ladies' service attracts repeat customers from all walks of life.

Taking Hylea as an example, the Ladies do not discriminate by quality when judging what works of artistic expression they should defend. Agreeing instead that Hylea's will is changing and inscrutable, the Ladies believe that a bad poem could well be a test of their piety as much as a masterful one, and both are equally worthy of representation. The only quality which the Ladies abhor is faintheartedness. If an artist presents their work to the Ladies' mercy, they must be prepared for total commitment—with no allowances for sick performers, rewrites, or even death. Berath, they argue, has no cause to get between Hylea and her beloved ones. There are dark chapters in theater history where dead actors have been costumed and propped up on stage, their lines delivered by a proxy until the scheduled end of the play's run, as the Ladies dictated.





CHAPTER VIII
SAINTS AND RELICS

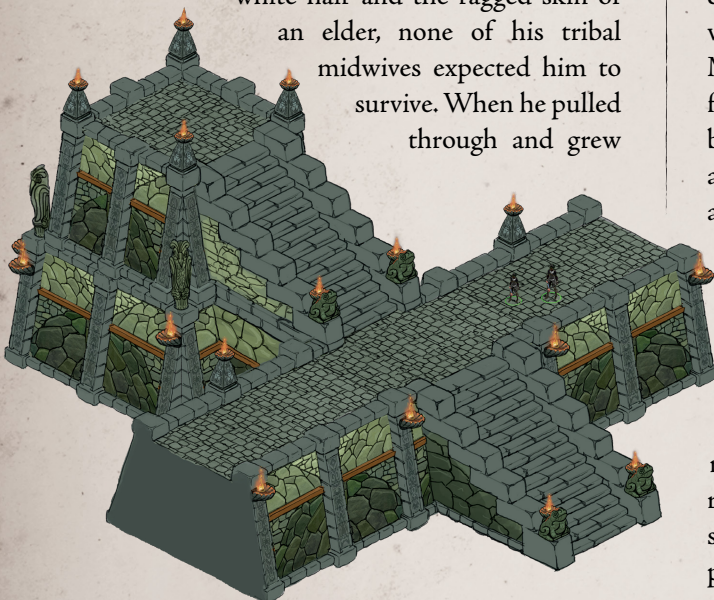
CANONIZATION AND ENSHRINEMENT

Throughout kith history, there have always existed figures who rose from modest beginnings to embody the will of the divine. Churches do not make a habit of legitimizing claims of divine agency in the actions of such people. The pressures of the faithful and devoted have caused more than one organization to relent and recognize the hand of the gods working through mortal servants.

Expressions of the gods can also be found in shrines, which are most commonly established in cities, villages, the untamed wilderness, and even sites which shun the presence of civilized kith. Pilgrims and travelers flow through these havens to offer prayer and take respite, often on their way to other destinations. Others occupy such sites permanently, taking refuge from all worldly concerns outside of their faith. Many of these dedicated locations boast artifacts attributed to the gods and their mortal servants, which serve as lightning rods to draw more of the faithful for inspiration and reflection.

SAINT KAMATU THE WHITE

The infamy of Saint Kamatu begins with his birth. Having come into the world with depleted white hair and the ragged skin of an elder, none of his tribal midwives expected him to survive. When he pulled through and grew



WE found a boy amid the abandoned wreckage of the place. Alone, crying, hungry. Had a strange look to him, but he was pleased enough to see even an outsider's face.

I invited him aboard and fed him the best Rauataian meal I could cook up in short notice. He took a liking to the bowl of sliced apples on my desk. The stories he told . . . troubled me. A people who rejected him. Blamed him for their poor farming habits and every snapped bone. I comforted the boy, told him that my people had come to set the tribes aright. This seemed to please him, and he asked what he could do to help. I told him to sleep in my bunk for the night, with plans to introduce him to our cannons in the morning.

As he dozed off, I caught a whiff of something foul. The apples had all rotted to black, and worms broke through the skin.

Strange child. The reason for his abandonment grows clearer. Instead of training him to be yet another powder boy, I wonder if I could put him to better use.

—Captain's log, Sea Canker

healthy, however, Mataru priests struggled to judge his caste on the basis of his soul, and so left him to be raised with his Roparu mother.

As the years passed and he developed through childhood, he never stood taller than four feet, which is an abnormality by aumaua standards. Misfortune also followed him like a shroud. By his fifth year the crops had failed, injuries and sickness became more common, and children were stillborn at an unprecedented rate. This progressed to such a point that the priests eventually blamed Kamatu, late in judging his birth as a bad omen and the harbinger of their decline. His coming was determined to be an omen from Rymrgand, whose mortal servant delivered entropy to the tribe's otherwise stable existence.

While the priests spent months arguing over the matter and speculating on the will of the gods, the resources of the island quickly depleted. The tribe sailed off to the next land on their regular circuit, praying that good fortune lay ahead. Loath to



bring the troublesome boy, they left Kamatu behind to fend for himself.

Shortly after the tribe abandoned their village, the Royal Deadfire Company armada appeared on the horizon, heavily armed and intent on making landfall after their long journey.

They arrived on abandoned beaches and set to work establishing a settlement, covering the footprints of the tribe which had so recently vacated it.

Interpretations of Kamatu's story and the meaning of his existence diverge. Though he was originally seen as a harbinger of misfortune, the arrival of Rauataian forces challenged many of those early assumptions. Some have come around to seeing Kamatu as an unlikely savior—both for ushering his tribe away from a soon-to-be beleaguered island and blighting the lands to make them all but uninhabitable to the foreign threat.

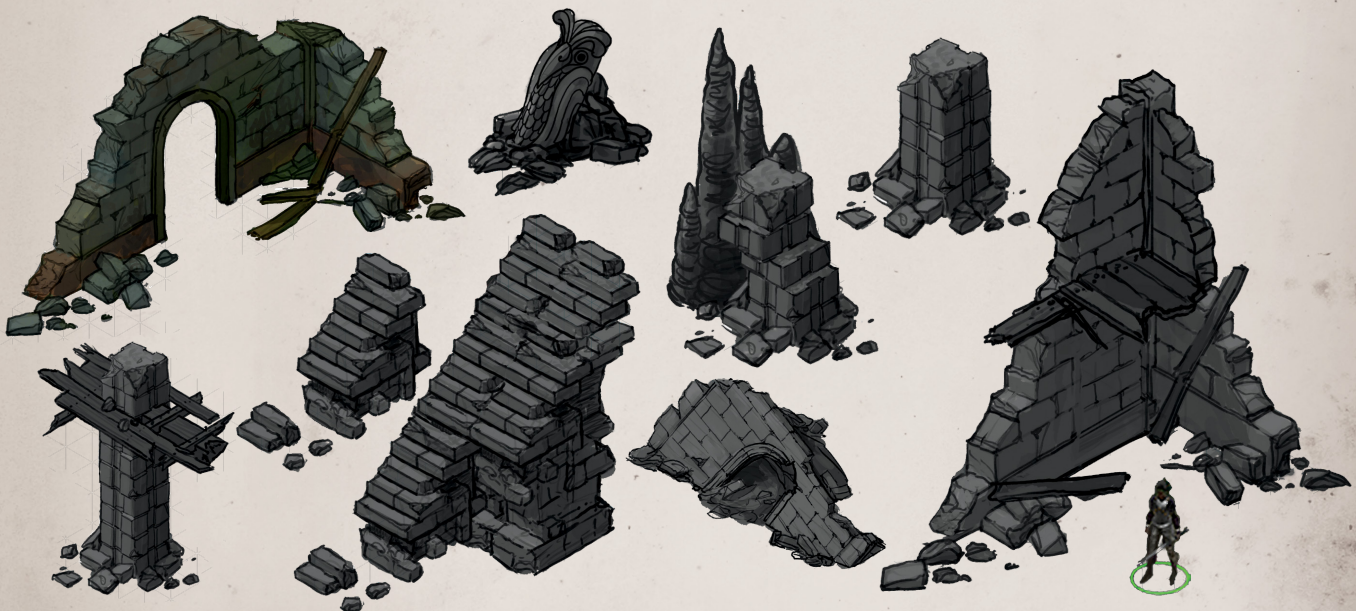
No matter the interpretation of the story, Saint Kamatu's tribe saw only the worst in him, and he never returned to Huana tribal culture.

SAINT CAZZA THE NEGOTIATOR

The tale of Saint Cazza dates back to 1220 AI in Grand Vailia. Hers is one of the few stories of sainthood attributed to Woedica, a severe and uncompromising deity who seldom shares any expression of her power with mortals.

As a child, Cazza's hand in marriage was promised to a local farmer as a matter of business and convenience. Before the ceremony, Cazza negotiated the terms of their arrangement with her husband-to-be until he bequeathed all his lands to her unconditionally. The wedding was called off shortly thereafter, and Cazza walked away from the deal still eligible and possessing a tidy fortune. Those who suspected Cazza of engaging in a confidence scheme affirmed that the recordkeeping was all in order, and quietly stifled their misgivings. The farmer never spoke of the terms of the deal.

Cazza later came into public attention as a woman of wealth and esteem. Through a series of political maneuverings, she argued her way into becoming the first self-made vicecontessa. From there, she found herself navigating high society with ease, seamlessly making her way into the hearts of her countrymen until she found herself seated on her country's throne, where she remained for many years and ruled in fairness as an advocate of the people.







Her posthumous reputation blossomed into stories of a woman who could talk her way into, or out of, anything at all using a combination of sharp wits and brilliant manipulation of established law. Stories would embellish on her exploits, claiming that she had negotiated with Berath to sidestep the laws of death, with Rymrgand to stall entropy and age, with the sky itself to produce no rain clouds over her head, and with the ocean to part in her company. Stories tell of her casting off chains by convincing all the links to separate at once, or walls to crumble by insinuating that the mortar had lied to the brick.

Some believe that Woedica poured her blessing into Cazza to prove a point about the ephemeral nature of existence and the power of disruption, but many more still see Cazza as a folk hero destined to see her will made manifest wherever she went.

SAINT WÁMODH THE GROVE

Considering the rarity of travel between temperate climates and the ice-strewn inland of the White That Wends, few stories break free of the local pale elf population and make it to the ears of outsiders. Saint Wámodh is one of the rare exceptions. His story was first traded among Vailian

explorers around 900 AI, though it is purported to stem from much older source material.

The story begins with a hunting party of pale elves and their efforts to track a herd of musk oxen across a long stretch of barren ice. Either they lost their way or Rymrgand intentionally led them astray, because when the hunters reached the edge of a glacier, their prey was nowhere to be found. What they discovered instead was an oasis of fertile earth which supported dense accumulations of exotic plant life found nowhere else in the region. In the center of this unexpected grove lived Wámodh, a godlike hermit possessing aspects of nature which grew upon his body. Water dripped from his fingertips, pollen fell from his eyelids, his feces were saturated with seeds, and he exuded a syrupy scent which attracted pollinators and decomposers alike from the insect world.

Recognizing what his influence on a localized area could mean for their food production, the hunters resolved to take him back to their tribe, where his gifts could be put to better use. Wámodh grudgingly accepted this offer, and the hunters gave him little choice besides. He never had a chance to explain why he had separated himself from kith society.

No sooner had they left the protective canopy of Wámodh's oasis than a giant form descended upon



the party—that of a skeletal and icy aurochs, the embodiment of Rymrgand. The god of entropy abhorred Wámodh's very existence, and had no wish to see any corner of his ice fields twisted into a garden. Wámodh fought for his life and managed to hold his own against the corruptive influence of the aurochs. Whenever a limb would freeze or rot, another would promptly sprout to take its place. In the midst of their unending combat, the hooves of Rymrgand wore the land down into a canyon which still exists to this day. At the bottom, a dense and unreachable jungle marks the place where Wámodh fell in defeat—or so the tribes tell, since the canyon is too deep and impassible for travelers. Other versions of the tale say that the battle rages on, and that Rymrgand is seldom seen because he is locked in the everlasting fight against Wámodh, the perpetual spring.

SAINT AGATTA THE BLIND

Born on an Aedyran farm, Agatta was an adventurous youth who lived an otherwise normal life. In her teenage years, she gathered some gear and provisions and made her way down an abandoned mineshaft outside of her village. The local constabulary found her three days later, wandering aimless and sightless out of the mine's entrance, which is where her notoriety began.

Healers attributed her condition to the harmful fumes which permeated the subterranean labyrinth, but Agatta refuted this claim. In the depths of the mine, she claimed, she had touched an ornately engraved wall of adra which emerged from the stone, and saw visions of bright towers rising from

the land. The meaning of the vision was a mystery to her, but it left her blind to all else. Darkness stretched around her on all sides, with the spires providing the only source of illumination.

The local mystic of Wael judged that Agatta had experienced an Awakening of her soul and for her troubles had gained the latent abilities of a Watcher. The trauma of the event had fractured her spiritual essence, leaving her blind to the mortal world but perpetually seeing into the In-Between, where spirits dwell before taking their last voyage to the Beyond.

Being wary of animancy and other attempts to meddle in the spirit world, Agatta's community rejected her on the basis of this unusual ability. She found herself on a boat for the Eastern Reach, where experts in such maladies might be better equipped to aid her. Agatta found no luck with the Brackenbury students, who were more eager to study her condition than cure it, but she did catch the attention of another potential ally—Dunryd Row.

Prior to their downfall (2823 AI), Dunryd Row comprised the Dyrwood's most sharp-minded investigators. Agatta found in them a sort of haven, as they were sympathetic to her affliction and anxious for her to treat it as a gift rather than a curse. In the ensuing years, Agatta quietly made a name for herself as an investigator of unlawful deaths, where her talent proved a distinct advantage. Even though the purpose and workings of Dunryd Row were a mystery to Defiance Bay commoners, the presence of the blind Agatta at a crime scene gradually became a comforting one.

When riots and scheming brought down the organization, Agatta was nowhere to be found

among the dead. Speculation arose that a community of Waelites had spirited her off to safety, cherishing her as one gifted to perceive the unknown. In spite of her mysterious end, Saint Agatta is well remembered in her community as a protector of the downtrodden and a guiding light to the prematurely deceased. In Aedyr she is not remembered at all, save as a girl who suffered an unfortunate fate.

SAINT GROTESQUE AND THE CAPTAIN

Among the stranger and more obscure folktales out of the Eastern Reach lurks Backalley Midden, an ooze possessing some echo of intelligent awareness (*"The Filth Garden of Defiance Bay," Almanac of the Eastern Reach, 2823 AI*). According to the tales, this ooze acted as guardian to an Aedyran courtesan and aided her escape into a new life. As travelers flooded into the Deadfire, they brought their folktales in tow, and the apocryphal Backalley Midden grew a strange new appendage on the frontier of progress and exploration.

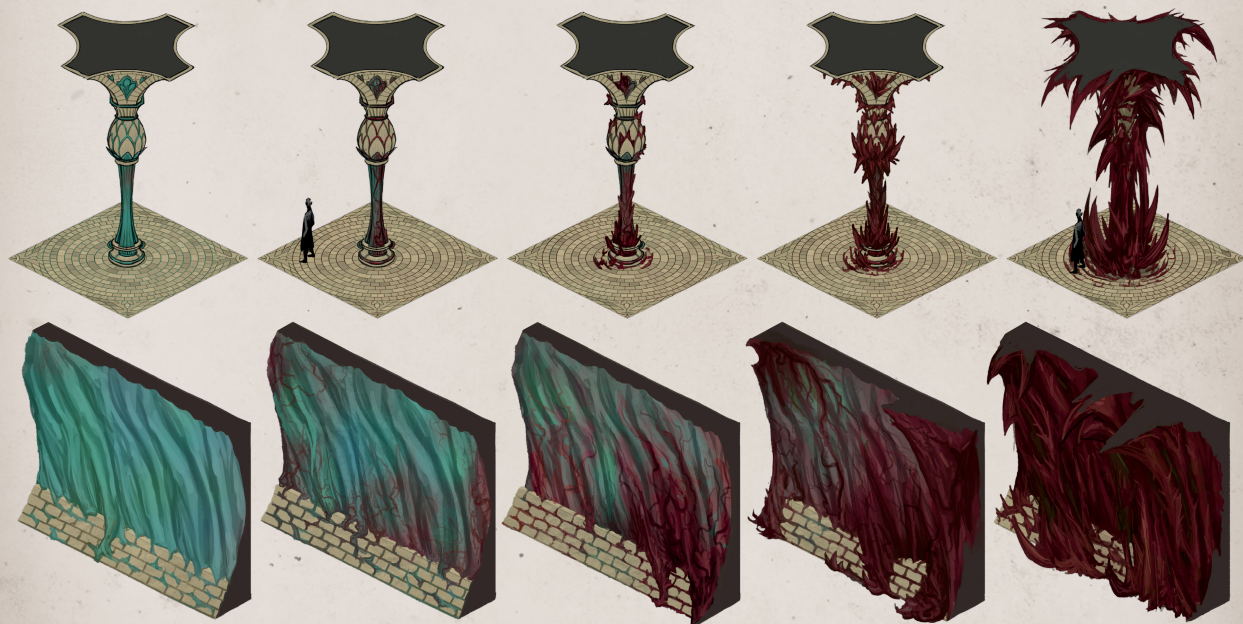
Witness accounts tell that a ship full of Dawnstars and other religious pilgrims came under attack by a sea monster of legendary size. Barely able to hold their own in battle, the doom of the pilgrims seemed nigh—at least until a strange, discolored vessel crested the horizon bearing an overpowering

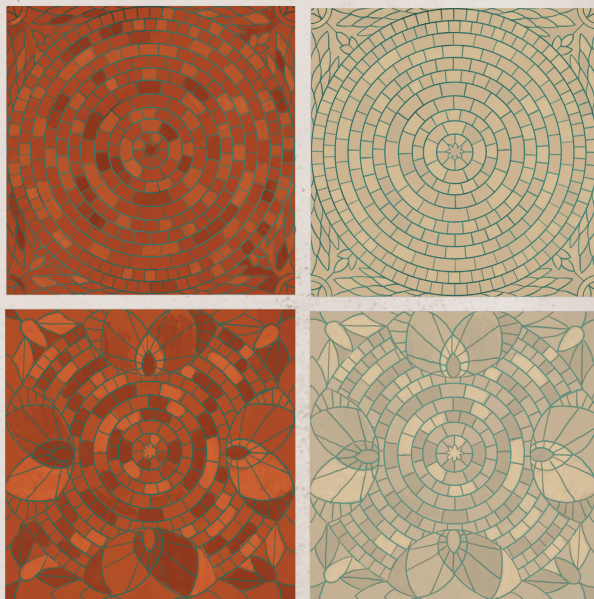
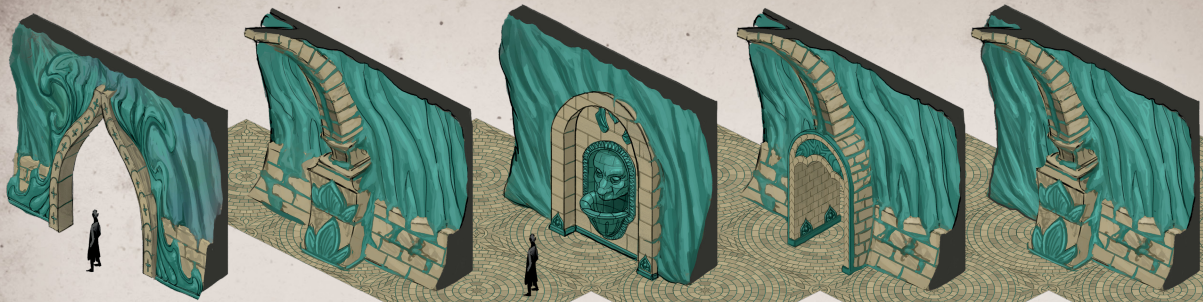
stench. Though the outline of its hull resembled a Vailian warship, this one possessed no sails or mast. Instead it propelled itself through the water with the aid of four massive fins beneath the waves.

Backalley Midden had grown significant in size, largely from consuming flotsam and other discarded scrap, and achieved enough density to hold its shape in the approximation of a seafaring vessel. Splintered wood, bones, coral, garbage, and cannonballs all decorated its black membrane, giving off a smell comparable to a garbage heap left in the sun. At the makeshift helm of this impossible ship stood the former courtesan, garbed in the trappings of a weathered captain. Backalley wasted no time in dragging the sea monster away from the pilgrim ship and forced it down a cavernous maw that had opened just beneath its prow.

The captain of the creature-ship introduced herself and made an agreeable offer—that her ship, the *Grotesque*, would keep the pilgrims afloat as far as Port Maje, a service which the pilgrims gratefully accepted. The *Grotesque* latched itself to the pilgrim ship and towed it out to fairer waters, detaching once they arrived at the shallows of the Great Reef.

The pilgrims landed on Port Maje with many tales of their unlikely salvation. With no evidence to back up their account, the colonial governor attributed their shared madness to food spoilage and the rigors of a long journey. After finding an





escort to their destination, the story of the *Grotesque* spread among the devout.

None could agree which of the gods held claim over the aquatic ooze and its captain, so the sainthood of the *Grotesque* is considered an oddity existing beyond any divine portfolio. Stories of the ship and its solitary crew member rescuing others in dangerous waters are routinely discounted as hallucinations, though many regard the living vessel as a source of aid for those in dire need.

THE MANY BOOTS OF THE BURNED GENERAL

During the violent months of Saint Waidwen's advance on the Dyrwood, the living vessel of Eothas brought holy fire to bear against his enemies. Armed with the power of his divine patron, he could reduce whole battalions of resistance forces to cinders. No sooner would he appear on the battlefield than the

Dyrwoodan armies retreated in haste, with the exception of one man: General Moerun.

Moerun had grown up as a devout Eothasian, but the destructive agenda of his god never sat well with his conscience. Prior to Waidwen's fall at Halgot Citadel, forces capable of making a dent in the god's army were few and far between. Praying to the very god he sought to defy, and rallying his own sense of righteousness, Moerun remained steadfast on the battlefield even as he ordered his soldiers to retreat. Calmly, but inexorably, Waidwen's forces crested the hill and found the last vestige of resistance—a lone general.

Witness accounts claim that Waidwen hesitated before incinerating Moerun. When the deed was done, glistening tears sprang from the eyes of the mournful god, as if in recognition of the horrible necessity of the act against one of his faithful. Nothing was left in the place of Moerun save for his boots, which remained rooted to the spot like

a monument to disobedience, and the ashes which had collected at the bottom.

In the years since his unfortunate demise, dozens of shrines have boasted of displaying the original boots of Moerun. None of these claims have been authenticated, as the original boots were those of an ordinary soldier and would be nearly impossible to legitimize.

ABYDON'S HAFT

Though legend tells of Ondra falling in love with the moon and seeking to draw it closer to Eora, followers of Abydon whisper an old and disputed version among themselves.

In their reckoning, Ondra spitefully pulled the celestial body on a collision course with Eora. With all his might, Abydon hurled his hammer into the sky and shattered the moon, mitigating the damage and saving all kith at great personal cost. His hammer split into many pieces, some of which fell back to the land harmlessly, while others drifted beyond, into the void.

By a twist of irony, the worst of the destruction came as the wooden haft of Abydon's hammer came crashing down atop a mountain range, splitting the land apart and forging a deep crater. It is to this remote and lifeless spot that followers of Abydon journey and visit the haft of the mighty weapon. It stands upright in the center of the crater, radiating the warmth of the forge. Pilgrims lay their hands on the ancient wood to feel the inspiration of the divine craft flow through them—departing soon after for the long journey home.

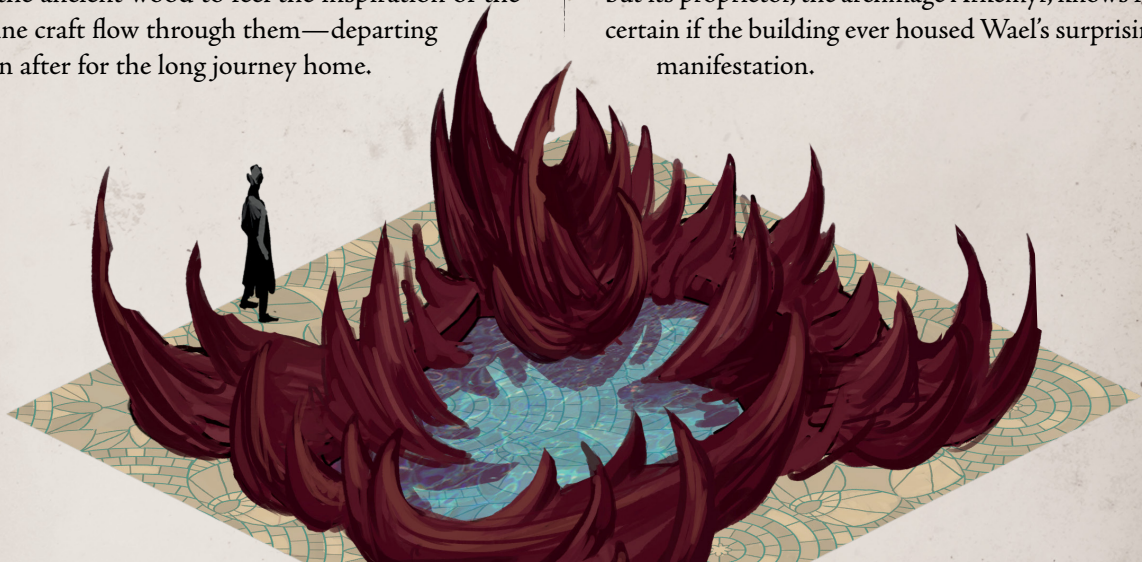
WAEI'S CUPBOARD

It is the nature of Wael, the god of dreams and illusion, to be always transitory, cloaked in confusion, and a source of existential doubt. Such is the case of Wael's Cupboard, which is at once a reliquary and a shrine with no fixed size or location. No one knows when or how the Cupboard came into existence. The why of it is more obvious—as a joke meant to pull the rug out from under the feet of reason.

The Cupboard has been known to take the form of closets, chests, jewelry boxes, snuffboxes, or entire municipal buildings. When an unsuspecting kith flips the lid or opens the door, the expected contents are missing. What they find instead is a black void, filled with winking eyes of various shape and size, and the sound of uncontrollable laughter bubbling out at a high volume and heard only by them. As the victim reels in shock, the door or lid slams closed. Opening again reveals the sane and rational contents as expected.

Followers of Wael can usually be identified by the state of their homes, which contain multitudes of boxes, doors, and chests far in excess of their needs. Though Wael tends to favor the more buttoned and official members of society with these visitations, all Waelites hope that the next box they open will reveal itself as a portal to the unknown.

Neketaka's magic shop, the Dark Cupboard, is named in honor of Wael's strange artifact. No one but its proprietor, the archmage Arkemyr, knows for certain if the building ever housed Wael's surprising manifestation.







CHAPTER IX
BESTIARY



ADRAGAN

As their name suggests, adragans, or “adra-born,” appear to have skin made of adra. Unlike their forest cousins (see: Delemgan), adragans are not bound to trees, but to very old and developed outcroppings of adra, especially those found in remote settings.

ALGUL

Alguls are a variation of undead guls whose physical deterioration has been halted by a wizard’s ritual. Few wizards have successfully converted a gul to an algul, as the procedure is complex and incorporates unsavory ingredients and spell components. Sages believe that the ritual is the first step for a cure for undeath, though it is far from perfected.

Alguls are fearsomely powerful and intelligent. Though their bodies no longer decay, their eternal hunger for kith flesh remains.



ANIMAT

The first animats were created to serve as guardians for royal tombs and sites of importance to

the ancient Engwithans. The souls of dedicated warriors and servants were bound to intricate sculptures fashioned of wood, metal, or adra in accordance with the rank of the departed and purpose of the constructed being. In the traditional pattern of Engwithan soulcraft, multiple souls were forced to occupy the same shell, a process that stripped them of all individuality and instilled only a base instinct for obedience. As the secrets behind this process grew evident, animancers began to create their own animats to serve as personal guardians, using whatever weapons and materials lay at hand.

These beings can only be created through the use of souls that hold a powerful loyalty to the protection of their charges. While the ritual to create animats can still be performed upon unwilling subjects, a lack of resolve in a participant’s soul can result in abominations that will immediately attempt to destroy themselves in a violent manner, often inflicting collateral damage in the process. Even successful creations remain vulnerable to the onset of doubt, and most animat creators take great care against allowing such doubts to manifest.

ANIMATED WEAPON

These seemingly living artifacts are temporary creations forged by accomplished, unscrupulous wizards. They lack free will, require no essence to function, and desire only violence. Generally, their purpose is to distract a wizard’s enemies while their master prepares complex and time-consuming spells from a distance. Animated weapons reflect the isolation inherent to many wizards, and are less costly alternatives to hiring traditional mercenaries for the same bloody work.

ANTELOPE

There are no extant native species of antelope in the Deadfire Archipelago; those few in evidence were introduced by settlers from the Eastern Reach, where they thrive in lightly forested areas. Local legend tells of an uncharted island populated solely by antelope, the result of a colony ship run aground. However, no one has ever been able

to confirm the legend, as all those who claimed to have seen it were drunk at the time of the telling.

Antelopes are not generally hostile, but may be found in the company of rangers as fearsome animal companions.

BAT

Significantly larger than their more diminutive brethren, the Deadfire's giant bats have traded in a docile, herbivorous diet for a strictly carnivorous one. They are aggressive and clever scourges of their local population. While they rarely attack towns and villages, they won't hesitate to descend upon a lone traveler outside of settled areas. In more recent years, colonial settlers have made report of giant bats unlatching windows and, in one bizarre incident, an armory door.

Giant bats are, as their name implies, quite large. Though their wingspans are remarkable—nearly six feet from tip to tip—the weight of their long, muscular bodies curtails their ability to fly between islands. Consequently, giant bats are highly specialized to their home island environments, resulting in a truly remarkable variety of bat types.

Their means of predation is somewhat unusual. Giant bats do not echolocate, but instead crash into their intended prey, hoping to knock the target to the ground, where it can be more easily subdued. Compounding their threat, giant bats are also a natural disease reservoir, capable of transmitting several fatal illnesses (notably jungle rot and the pox) through their saliva.

BEAR

Bears are widely distributed across the Deadfire Archipelago. They favor dens dug into hillsides where their preferred foods (murkberries, yalōa nuts, and ants) are found in abundance. Slightly smaller than their Eastern Reach cousins, Deadfire bears are nonetheless vicious opponents when goaded to violence.

In the early years of Deadfire colonization, settlers were

occasionally killed in bear attacks. The Tikiwara bear incident is particularly infamous. Seven colonists died in the first attack, then three more the following night when the bear returned during a funeral vigil.

On occasion, Deadfire bears have been known to fall prey to tigers—adult females and their cubs being especially vulnerable. This is attributed in part to their inability to climb trees, unlike their counterparts across the sea.

BEETLE

Beetles are not quite man sized, but they still strike a sufficiently intimidating form to frighten off most travelers. The largely uninhabited swaths of the Deadfire Archipelago give beetles plenty of room to multiply. The most successful species of large beetle have evolved to not only camouflage themselves in the surrounding environment, but also to grow carapaces made out of common and hardy materials such as wood, stone, and adra.

Despite all appearances to the contrary, there is an underlying complexity to the common beetle. When they choose a material with which to develop their shell, they do so with a level of intention that

borders on artistry. Wood beetles will often bore intricate holes in their carapaces. By blowing air



through these makeshift pipes, they play an eerie music to attract mates. Stone beetles fashion rudimentary tusks and horns that help them defend themselves and attack prey. The intricacies of adra beetles are as of yet not well understood, save that they are notoriously difficult to kill.

BLIGHT

These amorphous clouds roil and swirl with violent energies. Within the maelstrom, dozens of humanoid shapes materialize and vanish within an instant. Faces scream in silent agony while hands desperately clutch and claw at the air around them. Biaŵacs, known as spirit winds, often create blights. If souls are ripped free of their bodies and caught in the center of the storm, they may stick together and become bonded with available elemental substances in the maelstrom. They are beings of pure chaos and confusion, and destroying them is considered a mercy to the souls trapped within.

Experimenting with blight creation is yet another questionable activity that has earned animancers a bad reputation in many circles. Some see it as dangerous and inhumane, others as a means to an end. The creation of blights is an accusation many fearful kith level at animancers.

BOAR

Wild boars are considered a nuisance and a danger in the areas where most colonists settle. Aggressive and fearless, boars have killed many human and elven children as well as fully grown orlans. Packs of boars can be a threat to any traveler or explorer. Though they are difficult to kill, their tusks are valued by traders and enchanters.

Wild boars are deemed pests by most communities, as wherever they are introduced they are likely to outcompete the local fauna. Their uncanny adaptability has made them challenging to eradicate.

CAT

Cats are some of Eora's most venerated creatures, welcomed for their companionship, admired for their cleanliness, and prized for their pest-control

abilities. They are used everywhere from docks to grand estates for curtailing vermin populations.

Cats are equally happy to reside with kith of all kinds, and are welcomed by all in turn—though they are particularly beloved of wizards, whose grimoires are often susceptible to the nesting instincts of mice.

They are vulnerable to predation by raccoons, owls, hawks, and wild dogs.

CAVE GRUB

Cave grubs are burrowers and scavengers capable of subsisting on little more than the moisture leached from rocks for their entire lifespans. Hunting larger prey only serves the most basic need of storing energy in order to carve out vast networks of tunnels and colonies for nesting. Although imposing, these creatures leave most of the backbreaking labor of expanding the colony to grublings. Mature grubs tend to retire from outward expansion, instead taking on the task of maintaining and protecting the heart of a colony and the grounds reserved for breeding. Their corrosive saliva is used as a tool of construction and predation, making cave grubs among Eora's most efficient and adaptable hunters.

CAVE GRUB GIANT

Though few explorers ever spot these creatures and fewer still live to tell of it, cave grubs of monumental maturity and size require burrows of significant height and width in order to easily maneuver. Aqueous sacs in the cranial cavity allow this enlarged animal to emit a biosonar lure that can attract other cave grubs to its precise location.

CAVE GRUBLING

Cave grublings represent their species' developmental midpoint and the status they will hold for much of their life. The hardest workers—and therefore the most voracious eaters—cave grublings are not above devouring each other (or submitting to be devoured) to serve a colony in need. The latter stage of their life cycle is typically

dedicated to breeding and defense, which are comforts and honors reserved for only those strong enough to endure this challenging and frenetic phase of growth.

CEAN GŴLA

Cean gŵla are violent, confused spirits unable or unwilling to move beyond the Shroud. More specifically, they are the spirits of women who have died under particularly tragic or traumatic circumstances—hence the name “cean gŵla,” or “blood mother.”

The popular image of the cean gŵla used to be that of a jilted lover. That perception changed during the years of Waidwen’s Legacy, when cean gŵla came to be more closely associated with grief-stricken mothers or women who had died in childbirth. Though the Hollowborn legacy is now resolved, that perception has remained, and many cean gŵla spawned during that dire time continue to roam the Eastern Reach and lands beyond.

CONSTRUCT

Constructs are developed by animancers to serve a variety of purposes, chief among them to be bodyguards and instruments of war.

Due to recent advancements in construct creation, most animancers have divested themselves of their earlier models by auctioning them off to new owners, who are rarely schooled in the maintenance of their complicated inner workings.

If not serviced regularly, constructs are prone to rusting, and their directives become muddled over time—resulting in aimless, repetitive behavior.

DANK SPORE

These giant mushrooms stand nearly as tall as adult aumaua and are topped by a broad and colorful cap. Their enormous weight is only held upright by the dozens of roots surrounding their base.



Dank spores are unique among their kind in their appetite for the souls of living creatures. They often grow and move in groups along the forest floor, searching for weakened or exhausted travelers who are unable to fend off their attacks. Once they



find a host, they bind to it and supply it with the basic nutrients required to keep it alive while they absorb its essence. Dank spores are extremely hostile once they find a host—they will attack anything that gets close to their meal with their poisonous, barbed roots.

Dank spores feed on the most corrupt and splintered energy of a soul first, continuing until the host is nothing but a soulless husk. This makes dank spore flesh useful to experienced apothecaries as a cleansing agent in soul purification medicines and techniques. Improperly applied, however, this treatment can lead to amnesia and, in extreme cases, soul fracturing.

DARGUL

Darguls represent the first stage in the irreversible decay of a dead body that is sustained only by soul energy. In this state, darguls have lost some portion of their memories and mental abilities, but still retain enough self-awareness to recognize their own decline.

Their hunger for living flesh is so insatiable as to make them reckless. They are more aggressive in their pursuit of kith than even fampyrs, yet crave secret and secluded environments where they can eat their prey without inciting the wrath of civilized communities.

Some fampyrs dread this stage more than those that follow, for they know they will likely possess enough of their faculties to fully appreciate losing them.

DEATH GUARD

Any form of undead creature or product of necromancy is the result of pinning a living soul to the body of its host. The stages of degeneration reflect how long this process has gone uninterrupted and how successful the undead has been at maintaining its prolonged existence through consuming soul essence or living flesh. A notable exception is the death guard, the only (known) naturally occurring undead creature in Eora.

Death guards come into being when a kith possessing a powerful soul filled with purpose



and determination dies with unfinished business. Through sheer force of will, on rare occasions they are able to cleave to their physical existence. Entirely sane, they maintain their faculties and reasoning, and do not degenerate as their undead cousins do over time. Furthermore, they have the power to pin the souls of living creatures to their host bodies, raising armies of undead servants to aid in carrying out whatever task or mission has come to define their strange new existence.

Death guards are thought to possess the favor of Berath, a reprieve from the cycle of reincarnation if their cause is noble and important enough. That has not stopped some death guards from carrying out terrible vendettas of murder and conquest, casting some doubt on the theories. They are an unusual and often tragic fact of life in Eora, and any attempts by animancers or others to replicate the “success” of their achievement have only led to suffering.

DELEMGAN

Delemgan are forest spirits bound to ancient, often petrified, trees. They appear to have mostly elven-shaped bodies, but their skin is made of wood and

their hair is long and plant-like. They glow slightly, and tiny motes of spirit light often orbit their bodies.

Delemgan are entirely magical beings, and as such do not use physical weapons to attack. They retain the overall shape of humanoids, but do not wear clothes and lack sexual organs. Their fair appearance is used in tandem with illusory magic, typically to lure their prey into a false sense of security, followed by a swift death.

These creatures draw their essence from their surroundings. While they have physical bodies, and can be killed if those bodies are destroyed, their survival is inextricably linked to the health of their environment. They feel no natural animosity toward other beings, but they will defend their territories with surprising ferocity.

Delemgan may individually be more or less hostile depending on the well-being of their locale and on whether kith they've previously encountered have proven to be dangerous or benign. They are traditionally friendly toward rangers and druids. Their spiritual link with trees has led to greater understanding of the link between rangers and their animal companions, though a definitive connection has yet to be made.

Delemgan are a natural hindrance to large-scale development. While they usually live peacefully alongside rural communities, towns and cities with an eye toward expansion may find themselves beset by hostile delemgan. While rural kith usually oppose the destruction of delemgan habitats, city dwellers often support the notion, believing that the delemgan's souls will simply reincarnate in other forests or return back into the lives and society of civilized kith.

DOG

Dogs have been selectively bred over thousands of years to distill their beneficial behaviors, abilities, and attributes into the animal that exists today. In addition to being kept as able, dedicated companions, they are also used by kith to aid in hunting, herding, and protection. They are ubiquitous across the cultures of Eora.

Stories abound of dogs so loyal they will stay with their masters even after death, eventually expiring

themselves. A popular Deadfire legend tells of a dog called Pusēke, whose dedication to his master is said to have been such that he still guards his master's corpse to this day, 115 years after his death.

DRAGON (MAGMA)

Magma dragons are found most commonly in isolated areas boasting active volcanoes, as they would otherwise be hunted for trophies in the early and middle stages of their maturity. Left to their own devices, clusters of drakes will vie for dominance over habitats in high demand, naturally culling the weak and leaving only the strongest and most intimidating examples of their species to thrive. Suitable nests are therefore hot spots of conflict and competition, and magma dragons are fiercely territorial by necessity. Their scales radiate heat and wisps of smoke. As they move, the orientation of their plates seems to shift in the pattern of flowing lava.

DRAGON (SEA)

Contrary to popular belief, sea dragons don't spend their entire lives underwater. Before reaching their full maturity, sea dragons will roost in seaside caves or rocky outcroppings with access to their native waters. From these private and easily defended structures, dragons can feed or rest with minimal concern for their safety. These accomplished swimmers dive under the waves to hunt—either picking off aquatic prey or using the water as a staging ground to ambush fishing boats (graduating only to military or mercantile vessels when their size allows for it)—but they don't tarry in the sea for long or they risk attracting predators of the deep. As they grow older and more confident, sea dragons will test their limitations by spending more of their time underwater, carving out a broad territory by challenging the most intimidating leviathans they encounter and arranging the remains of defeated foes to decorate the sea floor. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that elder sea dragons carve out secondary dens in the lightless depths, but such activity has never been conclusively documented.



DRAKE

Drakes represent the middle stage of a dragon's life cycle. They have developed from wurms but not yet reached—and may never reach—the dragon stage. Drakes will aggressively defend their territory and seek to expand it as much as possible. Drakes are actively hostile against others of their kind, as they represent competition for scarce resources.

Their coloration reflects the territory they have claimed. A drake living in a swamp, for instance, may be shades of green, brown, and black, and possess nictitating membranes, a flat snout, and raised nostrils. While all drakes can breathe fire, many also develop alternate breath attacks, incorporating other elements.

EFFIGY OF SKAEN

An effigy of Skaen is a horrifying creature called into being only by those most desperately oppressed who are willing to commit unspeakable acts to set themselves free.

Worshippers must choose one of their number to serve as the effigy, shaving this person's hair and removing all signs and symbols of gender or identity. The person is then scourged bloody over every inch of their body, their ears and nose cut off, their eyes gouged out and replaced with shiny black stones. Finally, they are made to drink the "privileged blood" of a person of wealth or high birth. This blood must be fresh, and the effigy must consume every drop.

If the offering is accepted by the god—which is not guaranteed—then Skaen, god of the downtrodden and the vengeful, will manifest in the effigy and become an utterly unstoppable and pitiless vessel, immune to pain and imbued with monstrous strength. As soon as the target oppressors are slain—usually in a gruesome manner—the effigy falls dead.

True appearances of the effigy are vanishingly rare. In the most recent recorded case, about a century before the present date, an effigy reportedly led a backwoods peasant

rebellion during which an entire noble family was captured, flayed alive, and nailed to the roof of their estate to be devoured by birds and flies.

ENGWITHAN SAINT

Engwithan saints hold vigil at locations deemed essential to soul manipulation. As befitting the importance of their task, only the most elite and respected Engwithan men and women contributed their souls to the guardian vessels intended to last for all time. Eternal service to the cause was seen as the ultimate expression of self-sacrifice, as these esteemed individuals deserving of the highest honor would never partake in the cycle they lay down their existence to defend. Saints are dangerous for being more aware and varied in their abilities than their cousins, the Engwithan titans, who are no less a threat for their sheer strength.

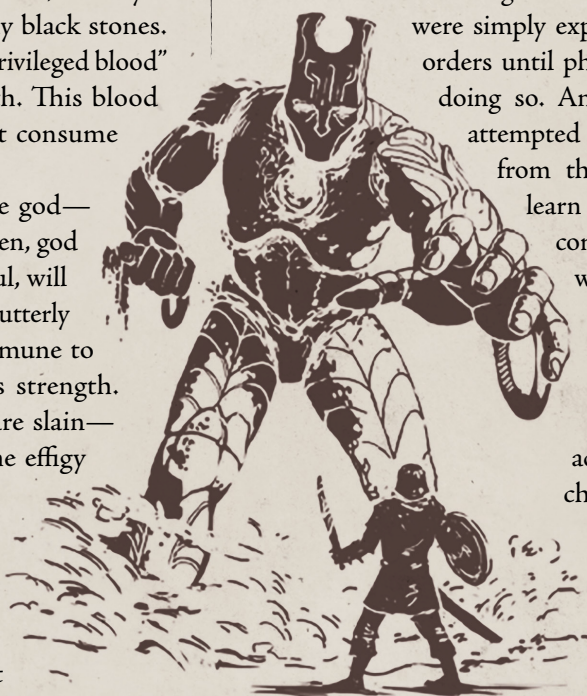
ENGWITHAN TITAN

Based on the Engwithan titans' quality and the locations in which they were first discovered, animancers theorize that the titans were fashioned to guard sites of vital importance. Their longevity and state of preservation would suggest that a titan's vigil has

no ending condition, and that they were simply expected to fulfill their orders until physically incapable of doing so. Animancers who have attempted to uncouple titans from their directive swiftly learn that the ancient commands are hard-wired into the titan's very being, and that no manipulation will be tolerated.

A core of glowing adra rests in the titan's chest, housing dozens of very old and stalwart souls.

Animancers have used this example to bring



animats to a semblance of life and awareness, but their results lack the consistency and capability of Engwithan craft. By the limitations of modern craft and knowledge, animats are limited to housing three to five souls.

EOTEN

Eotens feature in the most grotesque of folktales. Once merely the most aggressive and unstable of ogres, eotens have since developed into massive monstrosities that are both larger and far less intelligent than their cousins. Eotens have two heads, one notably smaller than the other, and when the larger of these is incapacitated, the smaller retains just enough brute cunning to keep an eoten fighting until either it or its prey is dead. Eotens are often encountered with rotting skulls dangling from their necks.

An eoten's unpredictable temper and total inability to conform to ogre society brand it an outcast. Ogre males or females who produce eoten offspring are forbidden from breeding again, and their unfortunate progeny are either killed on the spot or left to the mercy of the wilderness. The latter is undoubtedly what has led to mature eotens being found in rural areas, much to the detriment of easily preyed-upon livestock.

FAMPYR

Fampyrs are kith that have had their lives unnaturally extended. Though they retain most of a normal humanoid appearance, they are merely a few missed meals away from devolving into mindless monstrosities, and they know it. As fampyrs maintain individual personalities and memories, this morbid knowledge may manifest itself in a number of ways. Some may become reclusive and cautious, avoiding any threats that could prematurely weaken or destroy them. Others become outgoing hedonists, seeking to enjoy every pleasure the world has to offer while they can. Sooner or later, every fampyr will inevitably succumb to decay unless killed.

Because fampyrs require living essence in order to stay alive, and the blood of kith provides the

richest and most immediate source of it, they are shunned by most civilized communities. As a result, fampyrs tend to live at the fringes of society, if they participate in it at all.

IMP

Imps are troublemakers and vagabonds. As they neither protect a den for long nor concern themselves overmuch with feeding, they prefer to spend their days seeking out passing adventurers or animals to satisfy their amusement. This is where the imp's nefarious character comes into play, as "amusement" covers a broad variety of potential nuisances: exuding toxic gases, creating apparitions of other kith, teleporting, stealing, and generally doing harm to the unlucky victim. Wizards and other intellectuals have managed to bind imps to their service with mixed results. They can serve as spies, thieves, messengers, or in rare cases assassins, though their loyalty may go no further than recognizing an opportunity to do what they do best.

IMP (BRINE)

Lured by the essence that magical items possess, brine imps commonly nest in sea caves or among the islands that pepper frequent shipping routes. To avoid a raiding flock, it is advised that ships transporting magical items anchor at least five leagues from any imp-infested island during nightfall. Elsewise, the crew may find their sails shredded and the hull carved up come morning.

KRAKEN

Sailors across Eora tell stories of the beasts that haunt the deep. Of these, few are more feared than the kraken.

Krakens rarely venture to the surface, and they almost never leave survivors in their wake. They are massive, tentacled beasts, capable of crushing small ships and plucking sailors from their decks. Despite their size, krakens' soft, flexible bodies allow them to squeeze through tight spaces in search of prey or shelter. Thankfully, they prefer dark, quiet spaces to open water.

They are cunning hunters and, according to legend, Ondra's terrible servants.

LICH

A wizard's first foe is ignorance. Her second, pride. Her last? Mortality.

—Maura of the Seven Hills

Some wizards seek fame, others fortune. Many seek both. For those whom neither will satisfy, there is immortality. Few wizards possess the knowledge to grasp at eternity, and fewer still the fortitude, because the cost is steep indeed: one must sacrifice one's soul.

Neither living nor dead, a lich retains their mental acuity without hungering for the flesh of kith as undead creatures do. To avoid the decay of undeath, a wizard must bind their soul to their body. However, the process for doing so is unpleasant in the extreme. First, they must carve a series of intricate runes into their skull, then overlay that with a complex net of spell work, and finally complete the transformation by boring a hole into their forehead that they then plug with a large piece of adra.



What drives a wizard to become a lich? The reasons are as varied as the wizards themselves. One might fear death, while another might fear being bested by a rival. Still another may desire only the ability to continue their work, amassing ever greater knowledge of the nature of essence and the runes and incantations required to master it.

Whatever their reasons, all liches develop the characteristic form of their kind as their bodies rapidly wither and age. Their skin grows thin, almost translucent, stretched across their bones like a thin film of algae spreads across a pond. What hair remains runs white. Their body cools until its touch holds all the warmth of glacier ice. In the end, only their magic, might, and malice remain.

If a lich's body is destroyed, they become a void seer, a floating skull.

LION

Lions thrive in the lush forests of the Deadfire, particularly in the more arid regions of the archipelago. More populous than their peers in the Eastern Reach, Deadfire lions nonetheless struggle to maintain a foothold in the region due primarily to recent incursions by colonial forces who hunt them for sport.

In addition to their great power, lions are known for their roar, a terrifying sound that can strike fear into the hearts of even the bravest kith.

LURKER

Lurkers are composed of a colony of several different species of parasitic, carnivorous plants and fungi working together to hunt a common prey. As a whole, they stand nearly ten feet tall in a vaguely anthropomorphic "body" of vines, leaves, roots, and earth. The coexistence of so many separate organisms makes them hardy and difficult to eradicate. It is usually best to sever the parts that enable locomotion or, should their victim possess fuel and lack finesse, to simply light the entire colony on fire.

While the means by which lurkers form remain something of a mystery, some speculate that they assemble when certain species of flesh-eating plants

come together on a common host, such as the hollowed-out victims of dank spores, and that they achieve locomotion once sufficiently colonized. This theory is supported by the fact that many lurkers contain bones and other remains riddled with roots and spores when cut open.

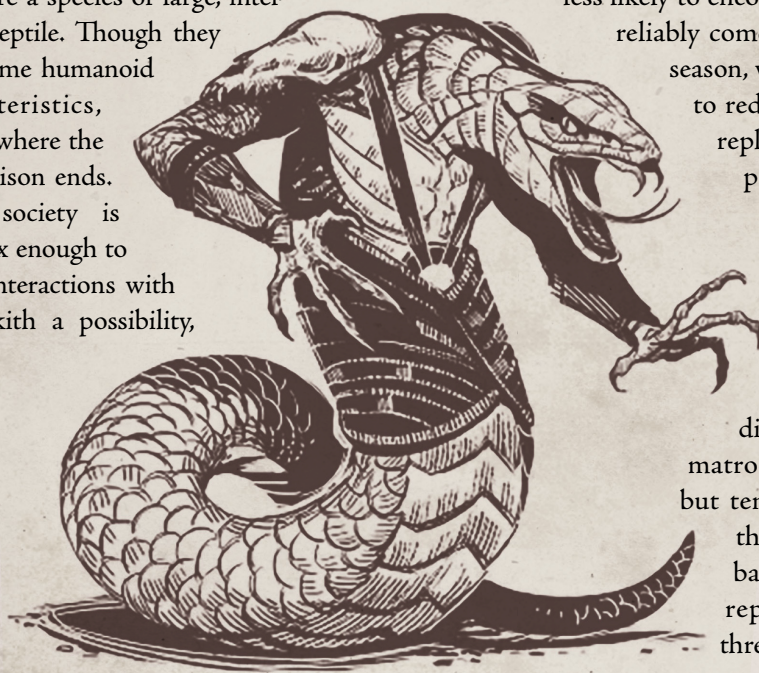
Lurkers are notorious for hiding in plain sight, often waiting motionless among the trees and underbrush to ambush their prey. They appear to hold a rudimentary intelligence and are at least sophisticated enough to store food. It is not uncommon to see several unconscious victims tangled in a lurker's vines to be saved for a later feeding.

MENPWGRA

Menpwgra are adragans whose adra pillar has either died or become corrupted, and their name appropriately translates to "rotten stone." Corrupted and filled with rage, they take on maternal and wildly violent protectiveness toward the remains of their habitat. Their existence usually presupposes that kith have meddled in nature's design, making these creatures vindictive toward all trappings of civilization.

NAGA

Naga are a species of large, intelligent reptile. Though they bear some humanoid characteristics, that is where the comparison ends. Their society is complex enough to make interactions with other kith a possibility,



but it is rare for naga to entertain cooperation as a viable alternative to violence. Naga adhere to a strict religious doctrine that mirrors the Wheel in many aspects, though it focuses prominently on the naga's superiority above all other creatures.

Within naga society, they divide up individual roles around a mixture of inborn traits, cunning, and ambition. Naga possessing few talents above the ability to grip a sword are consigned to the warrior class. The most venomous and keen-eyed naga are trained as skirmishers or elite commanders. The spiritual and intellectual naga are instructed into the role of shaman (or fight their way into it), likely spending much of their career defending this status against competitors.

OGRE

Ogres are large, thick-skinned creatures standing between ten and twelve feet tall. They are heavily muscled and typically attired in the furs or skins of their prey. Clubs, axes, and maces of bone or wood are their preferred weapons.

Despite their natural intelligence, ogres' volatile temperaments have historically prevented them from concentrating long enough to create anything of significant cultural value. Most live seminomadic, secluded lives in the wilderness, where they are less likely to encounter others. The only time they reliably come together is during the mating season, which often does almost as much to reduce their numbers as it does to replenish them. Ogres with a more peaceful streak take particular pains to avoid contact with others of their kind.

On the rare occasions that ogres are found working together, they are almost always operating under the direction of an ogre matron. Ogre matrons are larger than male ogres, but tend to be less aggressive toward their own kind. Where ogres have banded together, they have often represented an insurmountable threat to other kith.



OOZE

An ooze is a mobile, carnivorous mold that develops in secluded, dark, and dank places. Oozes feed off of ambient fungi and small insects as they grow. They begin to seek larger prey, including humans, once they reach the size of a dog.

Like all living creatures, they have a measure of soul essence, but their lack of intelligence and a true nervous system makes them mindlessly aggressive and thus difficult to deter. Their viscosity and mobility enable them to perform surprisingly nimble attacks, and they are capable of “spitting” corrosive enzymes to break down flesh and armor.

Some of the more dangerous variants of the species are disease vectors, making any confrontation with them especially perilous.

PANTHER

The scourge of the jungle, panthers are masters of the silent kill. Though they prefer swamps and rainforests, they have been known to roam across scrublands and deserts. Consequently, they are widespread in the Deadfire Archipelago.

Fiercely independent, they thrive in the underbrush, where their dark coats provide them ample camouflage, and avoid interacting with kith unless they perceive a territorial threat. Their impressive musculature and bone structure make these cats lethal pouncers, and the strength of their bite is such that they can pierce the shells of armored reptiles. Even a halfhearted strike from their paw is enough to stagger an unprepared opponent.

PHANTOM

Phantoms are souls that did not properly separate from the body after death. This usually happens as a result of severe trauma, particularly in the case of a violent death. Unlike lost souls, which are incapable of interacting with or being detected by normal mortals, phantoms (like shadows and cean gŵla) maintain a connection to the physical world. They will attack other life forms without discrimination.

Phantoms can also manifest from kith who

lived particularly chaotic lives, including violent criminals and the insane. Anyone can become a phantom under the right circumstances, but the fear of phantoms—and their association with the mentally ill—can result in vulnerable populations being shunned across many communities.

PIG

The common pig is the domesticated form of the wild boar. Adaptable and omnivorous, pigs can flourish in almost any climate, thus making them widespread across Eora. They form strong social bonds and are argued to be the most intelligent of all domesticated animals. Pigs are kept primarily as livestock, though some farmers have been known to leverage their extraordinary sense of smell in the hunt for rare fungi.

PŴGRA

A delem

ŵgra

 (“rotten leaf”), more typically called “pŵgra” (“rotten”), is a delemgan that has been corrupted by the destruction of their home tree or adra stone. They are as ugly as delemgan are beautiful, spindly and emaciated with cool tones to their skin. Their hair is dead, dark, and slimy, their facial features contorted, and their teeth long and sharp. Unlike delemgan, they are not surrounded by motes of light, and they are more than willing to attack unfortunate travelers with their long talons. Pŵgra decorate themselves with the skulls, skins, and feathers of animals they’ve killed.

Just as delemgan seek to maintain the health of their forests, pŵgra seek to corrupt them, making the two species mortal enemies. The rot that infects them endows their attacks with a ghastly poison, but it also makes their bodies weak and brittle, leaving them vulnerable to piercing and crushing attacks.

Since they can no longer draw essence from a healthy forest, they must survive by drawing energy and essence out of plants, animals, and kith. This makes them natural allies of shadows, which feed by similar means and enjoy the benefits of a shared hunt.

They are hostile toward all life, but rangers and druids are their most common foes.

RATHUN

These ancient servants of Magran resemble giants or massive constructs in appearance, though the trappings of a complex society are evident in their intricately decorated armor and helmets. Flames behind their eyes and peeking from under their skin suggest internal heat not unlike a forge, likely fashioned by magic and reinforced by their environment. Rathun are found patrolling the volcano chain of Magran's Teeth, a natural barrier which kith do not dare to sail near.

REVENANT

Revenants are undead that have devolved beyond even the relative intelligence of a gul. They retain their instinctive hunger, but lack the will or intelligence to reliably satisfy it. They are drawn to any environment where dead or dying bodies can be found. Owing to their lack of intelligence and self-sufficiency, revenants are doomed to degenerate into skeletons, though the process can span anywhere from months to decades depending on their environment and success at finding prey.

ROTGHAST

Beware the drowned kith. Pity the poor sailors, the fishers, and the Chamelea-clam divers who, in a stroke of ill luck, ingest the waterborne rotter—the parasite that takes hold in death.

Known as the rotghasts, these are the corpses that continue to roam—stinking and rotting, skin sloughing from bone while the host's own innards nourish an infestation that steadily consumes from the lungs out. The first stage of incubation progresses as a welling of a thousand worms from the guts to the tongue, enabling transmission through regurgitation and watery discharge.

Later stages of the nesting cycle involve bulging, easily burst tumors, blackened blood, worms writhing through the skin, and the complete loss of motor functions.

Sadly, there is no known remedy save for the utter destruction of the body.

SAND GRUB

Typically observed in arid climes, sand grubs are well adapted to the harshest of environments. Their thick, rock-hard carapaces provide protection, and specialized tissues between their scales collect and store humidity, limiting water loss.

Though adapted to survive long periods without water, sand grubs will frequently build their nests in close proximity to streams, ponds, and oases where prey is plentiful.



SANDWORM

Sandworms are ambush hunters, prepared to wait extended periods of time beneath the sands for a hapless meal to wander by. Their diet is limited only by their size—given a robust supply of prey, sandworms can grow to be truly formidable.

SHADOWS, SHADES

Shadows are created when creatures with heavily fractured souls die without reentering the cycle of rebirth. Because these souls are damaged, they drain essence from other creatures in a futile attempt to repair themselves. The more essence they steal, the more powerful and dangerous shadows become. As they devour essence, they pick up pieces of corporeal matter, giving them a visible, if indistinct, form. Luckily, shadows can only draw a small bit

of spiritual energy from souls still attached to a body or bound to an object. They mainly rely on creatures like the pŵgra, who can draw souls out of their physical form, to help them obtain the essence they crave.

Shadows have been known to draw spiritual energy from people while they sleep, when their souls are not bound as strongly to their bodies. This results in horrible nightmares that leave the person in an exhausted state the next day. If an entire town suddenly begins to suffer nightmares, it is highly probable that a strong shadow has taken up residence nearby.

Since shadows absorb spiritual energy, they appear invisible to creatures that rely on spiritual sight. This has led to experiments in binding shadows to armor or other objects to act as a cloak to obscure those who do not wish to be seen by such creatures.

SKELETON

Skeletons are creatures who no longer require flesh or essence, but whose drive to kill has been instilled over many stages of progressive decay. As a result, they will attack anything that approaches them, but they won't attempt to consume it after it is slain. The essence that animates them is energy at its most basic level, as the skeleton has lost all measure of will, intelligence, or personality.



If not killed, a skeleton may eventually grind itself into bone dust, or its essence may finally evaporate into the ether.

Skeletal savants are the remains of warriors, wizards, and other adventurous types. They are similar in overall properties to other skeletons, but they are more capable in combat and often retain rudimentary skills from their adventuring lives.

SKELETON (STEELSPINE)

Skeletons make formidable and persistent warriors, though their exposed bones can be vulnerable. Armor can mitigate this somewhat, though plate, chain, and scale mail gradually wear away at bones. Various solutions have been sought to prevent this, including the coating of bones in protective sheaths or resins. The challenge is to cover the bones without impeding their movement. It's a difficult task that, when successful, creates incredibly strong and durable steelspine skeletons.

SKULDR

Skuldrs are large, mammalian creatures that dwell in caves of total or near-total darkness. As a result, they have poor vision and rely on their sense of hearing to navigate and find prey. The protrusions and hairs on their ears allow them to detect airflow, which is key to telling direction in an underground environment. They communicate through screeches and clicks, and use these vocalizations in a form of echolocation. They are communal creatures who will nest and raise young together.

SPIDER

Enormous and hostile spiders come in a terrifying array of shapes, sizes, and colors throughout the islands of the Deadfire. Much more aggressive than their tiny kin, these giants actively seek out human and animal prey. Even the weakest of them can easily kill a grown kith if the victim is unprepared.

Seldom seen outside of the most remote locations, the fabled crystal eaters are enormous and powerful,

possessing magical abilities that some wizards believe have been developed through the consumption of adra and enchanted gemstones. In addition to their ability to raise a field of deadly crystal spikes, the venom of a crystal eater will temporarily turn a victim's flesh and blood to stone. Subsequent attacks by the crystal eater on a petrified foe are quickly fatal.

Dune spiders have adapted to desert surroundings by increasing their internal temperature to match the environment. Their silk can be heated to lethal temperatures and used offensively. Juveniles of this breed lack finer control over the regulation of their body temperature, which comes with age and experience. They spend most of their reserve energy surviving the harsh desert climate. Those who make it to maturity are able to harness their adaptation as a hunting asset. For this reason, the harvesting of spider silk is rare and dangerous in arid regions, and tents are scrupulously maintained to keep out pests.

SPIRIT (BITTER)

Spite is among the most enduring of negative emotions. Hatred often cools over time. Sadness surrenders to acceptance. But the indignation brought about by cruelty, injustice, or even simple annoyance can infect the spirit and survive even beyond death.

So it is with bitter spirits, which exist as little more than an amalgam of resentful instincts inclined to lash out at anyone they perceive, unsatisfied until their victim has suffered and died.

"Bitter spirits" is also the name of a homebrewed liquor popular in the rural areas of northern Dyrwood, and its effects can be described in much the same terms. The liquor has gained a small following among pirates of the Príncipi, who often inflict it upon fellow sailors who've lost a bet.

SPORELING

Sporelings are the larval form of dank spores. While more mobile and agile than their mature counterparts, these humanoid creatures are also far weaker. They spawn from dank spores and use their heightened mobility to seek nourishment. Like dank spores, spoelings feed off of both decaying organic

matter and soul essence, and they must bulk up on a sufficient amount of both before maturing into dank spores themselves.

STAG

Stags have been an integral part of cultures across Eora for centuries. They are hunted for their horns, hide, and meat, and revered for their power and speed. Does and fawns typically pose no problems for hunters and travelers, but great stags are known for being particularly aggressive.

STELGAER

Stelgaers are large predatory cats. While juveniles are usually lone hunters, mature stelgaers will often band together in prides to defend territory, hunt, and care for their young. These cats are aggressive and highly adaptable, and particular strains of the species may be found in a range of environments, from hot plains to frozen tundra. Consequently, they can be found on many of the more remote islands of the Deadfire Archipelago, where they compete with large predators like lions and tigers for both prey and territory. Their status as deadly predators makes them a noteworthy trophy among followers of Galawain.

TIGER

Tigers are solitary, silent hunters who stalk the fauna of the Deadfire Archipelago. The largest of Eora's feline species, tigers have long, muscular frames and powerful forelimbs. Their preferred mode of attack is to leap upon prey from behind, knock it to the ground, and snap its neck with their jaws. The few kith who have lived to recount their tale of a tiger's attack report they were not even aware they were being hunted.

As increasingly larger populations of kith have settled in the Deadfire, attacks by tigers have grown more frequent and widespread. Though they prefer deer, antelope, and other similar creatures, tigers will hunt kith when their habitat is threatened and their favored prey is subsequently

unavailable. Some tigers who attack kith develop a preference for their flesh and become the terror of entire villages.

Tigers are the subject of many local myths and legends, one of which credits them with the ability to turn into mist to better stalk their prey.

TROLL

These gangly giants stand twice the height of average humans. Their bodies are covered in large fungal growths that leak foul-smelling, pus-like fluid. Their oversized hands and feet extend to giant claws capable of rending most kith in half. Dozens of slimy tendrils hang loosely from atop their oversized heads, and their vast maws are filled with jagged, razor-sharp teeth. They have never been observed to use weapons, tools, or clothing, likely because they do not need them.

Looking at a troll, it can be difficult to tell whether they've evolved in harmony with lichen, moss, and fungi, or whether they've been overtaken by them. A troll's naturally clammy flesh provides the ideal growing environment for these plants. They provide camouflage as well as some protection from the elements, and the enzymes they produce also offer limited sustenance for trolls in lean times.

Because of their symbiosis with these plants, trolls generally dwell in heavily wooded areas, although some may occasionally be seen in damp underground environments that also house an abundance of lichen and fungi.

VITHRACK

The vithrack are extremely rare and dangerous creatures with natural cipher abilities. They are mostly humanoid in shape—though slightly taller and thinner than humans—and boast fanged, spider-like heads. Similarly to spiders, they are capable of spinning silk. Rather than creating webs, they use this skill to fashion complex hive structures along with their own very intricate and fine robes.

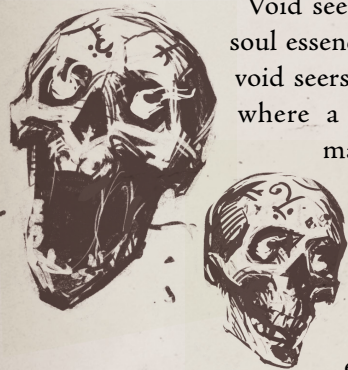
Male and female vithrack are indistinguishable from one another. They are primarily spell casters and mental manipulators, though they

will also attack with their fangs when forced into close quarters. A vithrack's psionic powers allow it to communicate mentally with others of its kind. Like many social insectoids, their society includes a variety of specific roles, including scouts and defenders.

Despite their intelligence and power, vithrack are not a major force in the world due to their low birth rates. While their difficulty conceiving is likely responsible for their famed hostility toward other races, it has also made the vithrack highly altruistic when it comes to young of their own kind. They will defend their nests to the death.

VOID SEER

Animancers, necromancers, and other unscrupulous spell casters who experiment with the bodies of kith have been known to create all sorts of constructs and vessels. Some exist as subjects for study, and others as sources of amusement.



Void seers are skulls filled with soul essence. The first accounts of void seers come from Old Vailia, where a now-infamous necromancer created them as courtly diversions. Since then, they have been used as patrols, guards, and attendants. Their small size makes them easy to create and direct.

WILL-O-WISP

will-o-wisps primarily inhabit abandoned ruins and other such forgotten places. They are thought of as curious creatures, sometimes following travelers across short distances for reasons known only to themselves. While typically peaceful, wisps are notoriously aggressive if provoked, and will viciously defend their territories if they perceive them to be under threat. As a result, wisps are often described as the weeds of the spirit world—small, quick to regenerate, and nearly unstoppable in large numbers.



WOLVES

Wolves occupy a precarious position in the Dead-fire. Though introduced to the archipelago many hundreds of years ago, wolves have been unable to gain a strong foothold in the region. Careful study has concluded that blame lies with the Huana, who rely on crops and the sea to feed their tribes rather than any livestock. Without an easy supply of sheep to poach, wolves are forced to compete with local fauna—like tigers—for prey, against whom they are sorely outmatched.

Because they face little threat from wolves, the Huana tribes have taken a somewhat bemused attitude toward them. The Huana aphorism “Like using wolves to hunt whales” describes a fruitless or pointless endeavor. Wolves remain legendary among foreign colonists for their speed as well as their ability to knock their prey prone, subjecting them to devastating attacks.

WRAITH

Wraiths are spirits that have remained behind after an especially violent life or death. The widespread violence endemic to the Deadfire Archipelago—warfare, family disputes, raiding—propagates them at an alarming pace.

Wraiths hunger for living essence, and they will attack any kith near at hand to acquire it. Though seemingly mindless in their aggression, they are clever enough to fragment groups, snatching up and isolating their victims so they can feed upon them one at a time.

WURM

Young dragons begin their life cycle as wurms, though most never develop beyond that stage. Wurms are clever and sly, if not especially intellectual. To develop into a drake, and eventually a dragon, a worm must have ample space and resources. They will not develop if they live near existing drakes and dragons. They must seek out a habitat that has not already been claimed by a larger counterpart.

Since the chances of further development are low, most wurms will band together in covens for survival. They are bold and highly aggressive creatures, if not particularly intelligent.

XAURIP

Xaurips are reptilian humanoids about the size of orlans. They adorn themselves with the bones of fallen enemies—mostly xaurips from rival tribes. They also have an affinity for large feathers, which they hang from and pin to their attire. Xaurip skin tones can vary from light green to a rustic brown. Their elongated snouts, which make speech impossible, and overly aggressive behavior have prevented them from communicating with the more docile races

of the world. They live in secluded tribal territories and are known for ruthlessly attacking anyone foolish enough to cross their path.

Xaurips revere dragons as deities and build their communities around the lairs of these powerful creatures. It is not uncommon for a small tribe to wander nomadically until it has found a drake or dragon to worship. Once a tribe dedicates itself to a dragon, they will defend it at all costs.

Elaborate rituals, in which the dragon consumes xaurip sacrifices, are a normal practice. As a dragon grows in age and size, these sacrifices become large religious events that cost the lives of hundreds of xaurips.

The power and prestige of a xaurip tribe directly correlates with the age of its dragon. The most powerful tribes have existed for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Warriors and shamans of these large tribes typically paint their bodies to resemble the coloring of their draconic gods.









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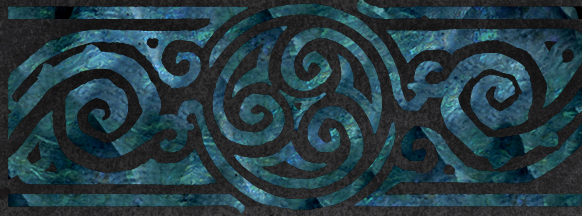
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We'd like to thank the entire *Pillars of Eternity II: Deadfire* team for their hard work and dedication in bringing Eora to life once again. We'd also like to thank every one of our Fig backers for their overwhelming support of our game throughout development.

Without our backers, this game wouldn't be possible. Thank you.

STEP INTO THE ROLE OF THE
Watcher and explore the world of Eora
with this beautiful hardcover featuring
fantastic full-color art!



The long-awaited sequel to *Pillars of Eternity* is ready to transport players back to the world of Eora. Dark Horse Books and Obsidian Entertainment proudly present Volume Two of the *Pillars of Eternity Guidebook*, which offers a detailed accounting of the explosive conflicts, determined factions, and horrifying creatures of the Deadfire Archipelago. This tome contains exclusive concept art and in-depth writing from the minds of the design team that expands on the rich lore of the games.



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